



**Glass Campus**

## **Some Helpful Tips**

**Marketing – creating sales**

**Pricing & Costing – math & science**

**Managing – doing it right**

**Business Hazards – inevitable issues**

**Advertising – introducing yourself**

**Teaching – sharing your knowledge**

**Safety – always safety first**

**Attitude – the key to everything**

**Motivation – what lights the spark**

**Quips & Quotes – words well put**



# How it Started

*A friend asked me why I was posting daily tips for artisans on how to sell their work.*

*It started with a question asked in a private email I thought the answer would also benefit others so I posted it on a few FaceBook groups. That posting lead to a few more posted tips which lead to a few more - so I thought it would be fun to post one a day until 100. When it got past 100 I just kept going. When it approached 200 postings I thought I would do 365 to represent a full year then I remembered that it started with my belief sharing benefits everyone. It comes around. We get back what we give out. It comes full circle 360 degrees. So here are 360 tips I hope you find helpful.*

## Why?

### 1. Because I can

*I've taught Entrepreneurship for almost 50 years, worked as a corporate consultant and created more than a dozen businesses and consulted for many more. I produced pottery and glass art as hobbies and turned both into successful profitable businesses. I've been teaching artisans how to sell their work in my studio, as a guest instructor in other studios and online.*

### 2. Because I should

*I have always been personally committed to an ideology I adopted as a business slogan.*

***“When we all share we all gain”.***

*Over the years many people have helped me. I feel a responsibility to pass that along by helping others wherever and whenever I can.*

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## Marketing – creating sales

### 1. Price on bottom

A tip for selling at retail markets. When selling your work at retail markets you should put prices on the bottom. Most artisans place prices on top or somewhere easy to see. Sophisticated sellers place them on the bottom for a VERY specific reason. It provides extremely valuable information. We humans are a tactile species. If we like something we touch it. If a prospective buyer sees something they like they touch it so if they like the look of one of your offerings they pick it up to check the price. If they like it they pick it up. If they don't like it they don't touch it. This is where it's important. If something doesn't get picked up you know it's not liked. Stop making it. If they pick it up and don't buy it they just told you they like it but reject the price. Either look to adjust the price or stop making it and focus on what does sell.

### 2. Take a Stroll Stopper

A common mistake artisans make at markets is not taking big expensive piece because they assume they are too expensive for that venue. For every show, regardless of how big or how small, you should have at least one star piece to show off what you're capable of. I call them "stroll stoppers" because I noticed when visitors were strolling through the show and spotted that star piece it stopped their stroll and diverted them over to look at it. It was pretty common for someone to admire a big expensive piece, comment how much they liked it and lament being unable to afford it – but a fair few bought a less expensive piece before returning to their stroll. Stroll stoppers increase sales. The more people that stop to look at your display the more people will buy something. Everything you do to draw people over increases your sales. Display your best work.

### 3. Don't Forget the Guys

Art shows attract more women but men buy more impulsively. That isn't sexist. It's a generalization, and like all generalizations there are exceptions, but a generalization that is statistically valid. Women are more likely to pause to justify a purchase while for most men the only justification is they like it. Most women like to shop. They enjoy the experience. Again, a generalization but statistically valid. Most men hate to shop – they consider it a chore to be dealt with as expediently as possible. Tools and sports stuff are usual exceptions. When a woman sees something she likes, she is more likely to take time to think about and justify the purchase. If a man sees something he likes he's more likely to just buy it. When a possible buyer pauses to "think about it" it's rare for them to come back. Many artisans mistakenly focus on making what women like because they are the majority of their customers - but forgetting that men are also possible customers and are often the ones buying more expensive pieces. When I started offering male oriented items at retail shows I immediately learned men make less purchases but more often bought more expensive pieces. Also, many women commented how great it was they found something appropriate as a gift for a guy. Just because most of your customers are women don't be a fool and forget the guys.

### 4. Provide Shipping

We have all lost sales to tourists or visitors because the prospective buyer is concerned about getting it safely home. Instead of losing those sales you can learn how to pack and ship for them as a service. When you hear someone voice concern about getting it home you can ensure the sale (sales pros call it closing) by offering to ship it for them. They've just told you they like it. Now is the time to step in, remind them they have good taste and offer to help them own it. Learn how to pack and how to quote shipping costs. I figured out the total cost for packing and



shipping to anywhere in Canada or the USA could be covered by 20% to 25% of the retail price. To quote for anywhere else I'd just make my best SWAG (Scientific Wild Assed Guess). I closed a lot of high ticket sales I know I would not have happened without that shipping offer. I even expanded that offer to provide drop shipping for shops I sold wholesale to. They made the sale and had me make one and ship it to their customer. When their customer voiced concern about getting it home the shop could step in and offer to do it for them. Many of them have told me that offer closed a lot of sales for them. If offering to ship it for an extra 20% didn't close the sale they would sometimes step in and graciously provide shipping free. Remember, the shop is reselling it for 2 times the wholesale price so is still making 30% on the sale and doing nothing more than telling me what and where to ship – and not parting with the piece they had on display

## **5. Price Perfect**

Costing is Science – Pricing is Art.

Costing is simple math.  $\text{Material} + \text{Labour} + \text{Overhead} = \text{Cost}$

$\text{Cost} + \text{Profit} = \text{Price}$ .

It's relatively easy to determine your cost but NOT so easy to decide on a price. How much can you sell it for? How high can you set the price before the price is so high nobody buys? How low can you set the price before it's so low you're either working cheap or even free? How do you choose the right price? Some suggestions:

- Ignore what anyone else sell for. Your work should be uniquely yours so your prices should be uniquely yours. Base your prices on your costs plus what you want for your time. What it costs someone else or what someone else wants for their time is irrelevant. You calculate what your costs are and you decide what your time is worth.
- Start low. Start at the lowest price you can tolerate. If something sells, make more and raise the price. Repeat the process. If you start with a high price you don't know if something isn't selling because people don't like it or because they think the price is too high. Start low. Nobody ever started a business with high prices with the idea they could reduce them if stuff didn't sell.
- If you're a beginner and just starting to experiment with selling your work there's no reason to not sell at prices that just cover materials cost. You might be working free but you are also getting your education subsidized. Some countries pay you to go to school. This isn't one of them.

## **6. What to Make?**

If you want people to buy your work you must provide a reason to buy from you instead of from someone else. What makes your work special? Don't try to compete on price or on quality. You can never match the prices for imports or those from hobbyists willing to sell for just their material cost – nor can you compete on workmanship quality against hobbyists willing to expend many hours of time just for the fun of making it. If you want a competitive advantage, be original. Make something others don't make. Especially avoid the common mistake of assuming if there is a large market for something you should make it. When there is a large market for something there is almost always a large supply. Jewelry is the best example of that. There is always an excess supply of jewelry. An equally common mistake is making things that are easiest to make. The more difficult something is to make the less supply there is of it. The most effective way to compete is by making something different – something other sellers don't offer. Be unique. Be original.

## **7. Perceived value**

There is no real value. There is only perceived value – what someone thinks it's worth. A prospective buyer doesn't care how long it took you to make something, doesn't care how much the materials cost you and doesn't care how much experience was needed to learn how to make



it. They don't care if you're a hobbyist or a professional artist. They care ONLY about what they think it's worth. If you want someone to buy your work you must convince them it is worth your asking price. Why should they buy from you and not from someone else? What is special about yours?

### **8. Selling Wholesale.**

Selling wholesale is when you sell for a set price to a shop or gallery who will resell it at a higher profit. The most significant advantage is it's a firm sale. You aren't taking your work to a market or putting it on consignment hoping it will sell. The usual wholesale discount is 50% off retail. It's widely referred to as the "keystone" price. Many artisans complain they think it's unfair the shop gets half the selling price while you did all the work and pay for all the materials but that complaint ignores the contribution the wholesale buyers makes in providing the venue, displaying and selling your work and freeing you to focus on what you do best – make stuff. Selling at markets or online where you get the full retail price or selling on consignment for a commission less than 50% can be seductive but it has been my consistent experience selling wholesale is so very much more efficient it produces a significantly higher net income than selling retail or on consignment

### **9. Converting Consignment to Wholesale**

A definite wholesale sale is always better for you than a potential consignment sale but shop owners prefer consignment because it removes the risk of buying something that doesn't sell – especially if they have never sold your work before. An effective way to remove that fear is for you to offer the first order "on trial". Offer to put together a mix of your work on a 30 day trial. At the end of 30 days they either pay for the entire order and continue into the future as a wholesale customer or they pay for what they sold and return the rest.

### **10. Price Universality**

If you sell your work wholesale to shops or galleries and also sell it retail it's important both you and your wholesale customers have the same retail price. Your wholesale customer expects to sell at twice the price they paid you. When you sell retail you should sell at that price. You might be tempted to sell at a little lower price but if you do that you provide unfair (and unreasonable) competition to your wholesale customer. Setting prices can be complicated. A simple formula that has worked well for me for many years is to carefully calculate cost (labour + materials + overhead) and multiple it times 3 to establish the retail price – then offer 50% off for wholesale purchase.

### **11. Wholesale Price Qualification.**

The original idea of a wholesale price was a lower price for buying the whole case or the whole roll. Over the years that changed with suppliers offering discounts for "qualified" buyers – for example if bought to be resold. Everyone wants to buy at lower wholesale prices so determining who legitimately "qualifies" has become extraordinarily complicated for the seller. Many suppliers are now returning to the original practice of basing prices on quantity. One price for 1, a discount for 10 and a bigger discount for 50. If you sell wholesale it's reasonable to require a minimum first purchase. One of my businesses makes tools for glass art and pottery. Our minimum first order is \$1,000 for wholesale price. That's relatively low. One of the companies I buy pottery clay from for resale has a minimum first purchase of \$15,000. We also refuse to sell wholesale to anyone that doesn't have a physical shop and is not just an online seller. If you plan to sell wholesale you SHOULD set, and strictly enforce, a minimum first order size to qualify.

## **12. Offer Return Option**

Every gift shop and gallery owner fears buying something that won't sell and is usually the main reason they prefer consignment. It's a legitimate fear but it's a fear you can remove by offering them an open credit return option on anything at any time. If they think something they bought from you won't sell in their shop let them return it for a credit to buy something else. When I started doing that it encouraged many of my wholesale customers to experiment with some more expensive items. We were both happy to see those more expensive items sell for them. I've had shops that were at first hesitant to buy things over \$100 evolve to selling \$1000 pieces.

## **13. Grant Exclusivity**

It's tempting to sell to anyone willing to buy but placing your work in too many outlets can be harmful to your business. When you decide what to make you must ask, "Why would they buy my work and not someone else's?" Shop owners will ask, "Why would I carry work that is readily available in many other places?". You want your work to be distinctive. They want what they offer for sale to be distinctive and will often ask for exclusive rights to what you make. Give it to them. Give each of your wholesale customers territorial exclusivity. Sell to one outlet, and ONLY one outlet in each community. If you sell at retail markets, advertise what shops carry your work. If you have a website, list the retail outlets that sell your work. Always remember....this is a partnership. You make stuff and they sell it for you. If many other places sell your work the shop owner will treat your work as just another product offered for sale. If they have territorial exclusivity they will put extra effort into how they display and promote your work. It's a big world. No reason to concentrate sales in a small area.

## **14. Wholesale Shows**

If you want to expand wholesale sales you might consider exhibiting at a wholesale show. These are not to be confused with retail markets where you sell your work. At a wholesale show you take display samples of everything you offer and take orders for later delivery. Wholesale shows are closed to the public. To be admitted a prospective buyer must apply and confirm they qualify as a wholesale buyer – usually by providing a business licence. If you would like to visit a wholesale show but don't qualify as a wholesale buyer, you can contact the show management and tell them you are an artisan considering exhibiting. Most will give you a "visitor" pass that allows you to see the show and talk to the vendors but you wear a badge that tells the vendors they are prohibited from selling anything to you. For artisans concerned that wholesale price is almost always 50% of retail, they will be horrified to see wholesale prices on jewelry are often 25% of retail. YES – jewelry sells retail for 4 times wholesale price.

## **15. Choose Your Wholesale Partners**

Selling your work at a retail market is a good way to make contacts for wholesale sales and exhibiting at wholesale shows is equally good but the VERY BEST way to connect with a quality wholesale account is to personally select them with a direct sales call. Don't make the mistake of contacting a shop or gallery that already has work similar to yours and don't make the mistake of choosing one only because it's a high class venue. Choose one you honestly believe your work would be a good fit in to add to what is being offered. Pick an outlet you think would benefit by having your work added to what is already there. If you make the choice it's a lot more likely you can build a long term partnership with mutual benefit. To sell my work one of the smartest things I ever did was my son and I taking a road trip from Canada to Mexico. Went from BC down the Washington, Oregon and California coast to San Diego. In every coast town we'd do a quick drive through and select a prospect. I'd walk in with a box of samples and price list, put a few samples on the counter and deliver my pitch. *"If you can spare 2 minutes I have a product line I think would make a great addition to what you're already offering for sale"*. I had a few, "We're already fully stocked", "Our manager isn't here" and "We only buy at the wholesale gift shows" but

I was always treated with respect and often thanked for coming in. In more than a dozen shops I got an order on the spot and a dozen more contacted me later. What I got most was expressed surprise to be called on by the real artisan instead of a sales agent. Go visit some prospective buyers. You might not be willing to do a 1400 mile road trip like I did but I'm sure if you make the effort to visit some shops near you it will be worth your while. Why not make it a vacation? Remember those 4 wonderful words. Tax Deductible Business Trip.

## **16. Sales Agents**

A sales agent is someone that acts as your representative to sell your product for a commission to wholesale buyers. The usual commission is 10% but some ask as much as 20%. This is much like a gallery taking a sales commission on goods you placed with them on consignment. They not only get the commission on the first order they sell to that account but get it on every order that customer places with you in the future. They open the account but don't necessarily service it. Too often sales agents pay little attention to how your product fits in a retail outlet but care only about making a quick commission sale. They also often do little to actively promote your product but just add it to the variety they already offer. A sales representative working on commission can do a lot to boost sales for you but you should be VERY careful who you choose work with and be EXTRA careful what promises and commitments you make to them. A good agent can make your business bloom but a poor one can destroy it. An example of where an agent can be harmful to your business is where they take a big order from a retailer that uses it as a discount promotion. The shop looks like a hero with a big discount sale but all your other wholesale accounts will stop buying from you. Be careful. There are sharks in the water.

## **17. Finders Fee**

It's common in business to pay a commission or finders fee for providing a contact or reference that turns into a sale. If one of your wholesale customers sends a commission customer to you it's reasonable, and sometime contractually agreed, to pay them a commission. It can be whatever you agreed on or what you think appropriate - but 10% is relatively standard and is often part of a consignment/agent agreement with galleries. Even if you hadn't agreed to a finders fee it's a good practice, both personal and professional, to do something concrete to show thanks. A small thank you gift is always appropriate and makes a significant contribution to building strong alliances. You're supposed to be creative. Be creative in how you say thanks.

## **18. Juried Markets**

Not all retail markets are the same. In an Open market anyone that pays the booth rent gets in. In a Juried market prospective sellers submit either photos or samples of their work to be judged whether or not they can participate. Each jury system is a little different. With some it's whatever the market management personally approves. Some have relatively loose requirement while others are strict. The good ones judge carefully and professionally using a scoring system similar to diving or figure skating giving points for creativity, originality, workmanship, etc. The best are those using a "blind" jury where the jurors are shown examples of the work without anything identifying the maker. This ensures it is the work being judged and not the maker's name and reputation. When you're selecting where to rent space to sell your work you can assume the markets hardest to get in will attract the highest quality customers.

## **19. Select Your Market**

Whether you're selling at a retail market or selling wholesale to a shop or gallery it's always best to take some time to select who you sell to and where you sell. When selling wholesale choose outlets that you think are most likely to have customers that will buy your work. The same with choosing a retail market to sell at. One of the most common mistakes artisans make is favouring

low rent markets. Whether you rent space in a craft market or a retail outlet shop, when the rent is low it's almost always because sales are low. Higher rent locations are more likely to generate higher volume sales. It doesn't take any more of your time to set up and sell in a high rent market than a low rent one. Don't reject a prospective market because the rent is high and don't select one because the rent is low. You get what you pay for. When I was doing markets as a craft fairy gypsy I learned to favour the ones with the highest rent.

## **20. Use Retail Markets to Find Wholesale Customers**

Displaying and selling your work at a retail market can be an excellent way to connect with prospective wholesale buyers. But....be careful....too often it's asking you to give them work on consignment. At juried shows it's more likely to come from buyers willing to make a direct purchase. Wholesale buyers know that juried shows are more likely to display quality work and more likely to have artisans ready to sell wholesale. Gift shop and gallery owners are always looking for fresh talent and make a point of visiting retail markets to look for new sources. That applies especially in market locations likely to attract buyers motivated in part by the prospect of a "Tax Deductible Business Trip".

## **21. Demos and Videos**

When you exhibit work for sale at a show the more people that stop to visit your display the more people will buy something so anything that encourages more visitors encourages more sales. Doing a live demo or running a video is a terrific way to attract prospective buyers. Live demos are usually only practical if you have someone helping you but you can put out a TV monitor or laptop running videos to attract attention. When I tried running videos demonstrating how the work is done they worked as well as a "show stopper" to draw people to my display.

## **22. One of a kind**

Making only one of a kind items is great if you sell into high end galleries where they want something that is never repeated or copied but it's a deal breaker if you sell into gift shops. They want to know if they take a risk and buy your work to see if it sells, they will be able to get more of what sold. They know it sells so they want more. If everything you make is "one of a kind", every purchase they make from you is a fresh risk. Imagine a glass artist or potter wanting to reorder some glass or glaze and being told they couldn't get any more of that colour because all the glass and glazes are "one of a kind" and not repeated. What businesses most want is reliability, dependability and repeatability. What they want least is risk.

## **23. Too Many Choices**

Too much variety can be more harmful than helpful and can be worse than too little. Offering too many choices in too many colours and too many sizes can create "decision paralysis" where the buyer has so many choices they can't decide so choose none. Keep the variety reasonable and manageable. The most popular and most effective quantity is three. Three different colours in three different sizes. Not only will controlling the variety offered help encourage buyers to make a choice it also helps reduce your cost to make what you sell. If you want to offer more variety it's better to make some completely different designs – each in three different colours and three different sizes.

## **24. Professional Display**

There are two distinctively different ways to display work. There is the "Thrift Shop" display where everything is scattered about intermixed the way we might decorate our living room. Candles mixed with pottery mixed with glass mixed with leatherwork mixed with jewelry. For a business that is the mark of an amateur. Alternatively, there is the "Drug Store" display where everything is categorized in groups. All the candles in one group, all the pottery in another group and all the

glass in yet another group. This is how professionals display work. When you put together your display at a retail market you will sell more if you have an organized display sorted by style or category. Apply the same preference for professionalism when selecting a shop to sell wholesale to. You will sell a lot more if they apply a neatly organized display like in a drug store and not everything just scattered about like a thrift shop.

## **25. Hobby Business Hazard**

When you sell to a shop or gallery the objective is to create a partnership/alliance where you each share the same objective – to sell what you make. You make it and they sell it. A working partnership. That only works if you share that objective. Many gift shops and galleries are more of a hobby business being run for fun rather than as an income creating enterprise. That ESPECIALLY applies with gallery and gift shop owners unwilling to buy outright but only accepting work on consignment. Unless you are just making stuff as a hobby and don't care if it doesn't sell you would be smart to avoid dealing with hobby businesses and choose instead those that rely on selling the work on display to survive.

## **26. Big Customer Risk**

A lot of small customers is better than a few big ones. Having just a few large customers can be easier to manage but that ease comes with a risk. What happens if you lose one of those big customers? How harmful would that be? How easily could you recover? Smart business owners prefer to minimize risk. It's foolish to be so reliant on any customer that losing their business would seriously harm you. Also, having more small customers provides a steady income dribble with a little money coming in ever few days rather than waiting for infrequent large payments. Each of us can decide what percentage we're comfortable with and how much risk we're willing to take. Many years ago I learned to do my best to NEVER have any one customer providing more than 25% of my revenue.

## **27. Discount Dilemma**

Agreeing to discount your selling price to make a sale can be more harmful than helpful. You might be tempted to accept a lower offer but doing that is as likely to make the buyer unsatisfied as pleased they got a discount. Too often instead of being thrilled they got a price cut they think if you were willing to trim the price a little bit, if they have pushed harder you might have trimmed it even more. You established willingness to cut your prices. If they become a return customer they will expect to never pay your original price – and will tell their friends you are willing to cut your prices.. Everyone wants to think they got the best possible price. If you respond to a discount request by telling them, *"I didn't just guess at a price but took some time to calculate the best and lowest price possible. That's the price I'm offering it for"*. If you were willing to bend a little it's reasonable to assume you will bend a lot. Discounting is a slippery slope you should never step onto. Hold firm on your prices. A better way to encourage a sale is to offer something extra as a gift.

## **28. Sunk Costs**

"Sunk cost" is a term economists use to refer to a cost that has already been incurred. Once you have spent the time and materials to make something the costs to make it are sunk. Gone. Spent. The only way to recover ANY of those costs is to sell it - so anything it sells for is a profit. Once the costs are sunk if you sell it for only \$1 you make a \$1 profit. Large retailers fully understand the importance of sunk costs. If they have bought something and it still hasn't sold after 90 days it is treated as a tenant not paying rent. It is to be evicted. Put it on sale, donate it or trash it – but remove it to make space for something more likely to sell. If you have made something on speculation of sale it is foolish to hold onto it with the assumption you have to get your money back. What you do have to do is get rid of it. The cost is sunk. Move on. Sell it for anything

you can get, donate it or dispose of it and make something else. Each of us decides how long to wait before disposing of a sunk cost item but however long you are willing to wait you must accept the reality of sunk costs. Holding onto something hoping it will sell is like saving something “just in case” you might someday need it. The smart decision is to routinely purge to clear space.

### **29. 80-20 Rule**

The customer is NOT always right. Sometimes the customer is unreasonable and sometimes the customer is a lying thief trying to rip you off. Start by giving everyone the doubt. Treat everyone fair but expect them to do the same to you. Most of your customers are great – but not all. It varies with everyone but the 80/20 rule is a reliable generalization for all businesses. 20% of your customers will provide 80% of your problems. A different 20% will provide 80% of your income. Only fools allow themselves to be taken advantage of. Pay attention to which 20% are causing you problems. Either stop dealing with them or rigidly police their behaviour. Set firm rules and enforce them. Focus on the 20% that are not causing problems and making a steady contribution to your business. They are special. Treat them special. They are the ones to build a long term relationship with. I lost it when we moved into a new shop but for years I had a sign on the wall that said,

***“Prices Subject to Change According to Customer’s Attitude”***. It wasn’t entirely a joke.

### **30. Play Fair - my favourite 4 letter word.**

Be fair but be firm. Be fair to your customers and also demand your customers be fair to you. Do business by the “Golden Rule”. Treat your customers the way you expect to be treated as a customer. Do the same with your suppliers. Treat them the same way you want your customers to treat you. Be fair, but be firm. Don’t do business with customers or suppliers that you feel are not playing fair. If you play fair you will build solid long term alliances with your customers and your suppliers. If you allow customers or suppliers to take advantage you encourage them to continue and equally encourage others to copy. Be fair but be firm. Make fair rules and firmly enforce them.

### **31. Good agreements make good friends**

It’s too easy for a business relationship (or even a friendship) to be ruined by a simple misunderstanding or misconception. The best possible protection is a clearly worded agreement that assures any assumptions or presumptions are understood. The best relationships are those where every participant clearly understands what is expected and what is denied. Draft an agreement and enforce it. It doesn’t have to be a formalized contract involving teams of lawyers but SHOULD be something in writing in plain language that details what is agreed to. That ESPECIALLY applies to the Terms & Conditions of Sales and to any Partnership or Consignment Sales Agreement. Do not rely on verbal agreements. Avoid misunderstandings. Put it in writing.

### **32. Decision Paralysis**

It’s often hard to make a decision. Whether it’s a client that can’t decide what colour they want or you trying to decide what to make or what price to set. Sometimes it’s so hard it creates decision paralysis where no decision gets made. A technique that can help is to instead of making a positive choice, make a negative choice. Instead of asking “What is most preferred?” ask “What is least preferred?” I’ve often had difficulty with a client unable to decide what design they liked best when asked, “Which do you like least?” had an instant answer. By going through the options and one at a time removing the least liked could easily settle on a preference. Do the same with yourself. Make a list of all the options – then one at a time delete the least liked.

### **33. Seat Swap Decision Making**

An effective way to make effective decisions is to swap seats. If you're wondering what to make or what price to set or how to word an agreement, reverse the positions. Put yourself in your customers seat and ask what would you like if you were the customer. What price would be fair? What conditions would be reasonable? Do the same with your suppliers. If you have employees, do the same with them. Treat them the way you would like to be treated as an employee. I have always treated employees like family and both customers and suppliers as partners in a shared enterprise.

### **34. Artistic Isn't Enough**

It must be balanced with engineering and economics. You can make something that is beautiful but without adequate engineering it might collapse and no matter how lovely it is if it's too expensive to make nobody will buy it. Your marketing strategy should be to create a balance of artistic, engineering and economics working together with each making an equal contribution.

### **35. Product – Price – Place**

You might have a great product but you're offering it for sale at the wrong price or selling it in the wrong place. You shouldn't expect gallery calibre sculptures to sell at a flea market nor expect fridge magnets to sell at a prestigious gallery. I've seen examples of an item not selling for \$50 at a street market but easily selling for \$200 at a gallery or gift shop. Cowboy theme designs are less likely to sell at an ocean resort than marine and maritime designs and seascapes or sailboats won't be popular at a venue attached to a rodeo or farm fair. It isn't enough to produce a great product. An important part of your marketing strategy is to offer it for sale at an appropriate price and displayed in an appropriate place. If you want your work to sell, make product, price and place a team working together and not individually.

### **36. Piggyback Ordering**

If you want your supplier to give you better prices it's usual to just ask them for a discount. A better way is to work with them to help reduce their costs so they can pass the savings along to you as a better price. Maintaining inventory is a big expense. Instead of buying from their current inventory, help them bypass their inventory costs entirely by "piggyback ordering". Give them your order to add to (piggyback on) their order to their supplier. I do this routinely both with both my suppliers and my customers.

### **37. Drop Shipping**

Drop shipping is when you ship on behalf of your customer. They sell the item then have you ship it on their behalf to whoever they sold it to. This allows your customer to sell something they didn't have to handle and didn't have to process as inventory. I routinely drop ship both for things I sell to wholesale customers and for stuff I buy from suppliers. Drop shipping is a team effort where you both work together for mutual benefit. It works well but can be, and often is, abused by sellers that have no physical shop but just a website. Take care who you agree to drop ship for. Internet sellers are notorious for abusing drop shipping and can harm your business more than help it. It's a partnership. Choose your partners carefully.

### **38. Selling Jewelry – Plus & Minus**

On the PLUS side, there is a steady market for jewelry. It's easy to transport and consumes only small amounts of materials to make. On the MINUS side there is always an oversupply – usually a lot more supply than demand. There are too many artisans making jewelry for the number of customers buying it. Unless you make something especially unique or have engineered a way to make it at extremely competitive prices it is rarely profitable. Some artisans make only jewelry but many artisans like to make jewelry as an extra addition to their other offerings. Because of this



competition most juried shows, and pretty much all wholesale shows, specifically prohibit such mixing. They insist if you make things other than jewelry you may NOT sell jewelry and if you want to sell jewelry you may not sell anything else. In classes I'm often asked, "What should I make? What sells?" My favourite answer to that is, "Not jewelry".

### **39. Go for Gold**

Most artisans that make jewelry for sale choose to use silver findings instead of gold – usually because silver is cheaper and has more potential customers. That is often a mistake. The market for silver is much larger than for gold but there is lots of silver jewelry offered for sale. The supply more than meets the demand. The market for gold is smaller but often the demand for it exceeds supply. Customers that prefer gold will rarely accept silver and are accustomed to seeing lots of silver offered for sale but much less gold – so when they see jewelry with gold findings they are more ready to make a quick decision to buy. It is ALWAYS a smart marketing strategy to avoid a market that is oversupplied and instead go into a market with more demand than supply.

### **40. Must Art be Useful?**

When you make something for sale you might often ask if it has a function other than to be admired? Does the buyer need it to be useful to justify buying it? Should you make mugs and bowls and plates and things that are useful or should you make things that have no use other than being pleasing to look at? Yes, there are many customers that do need to justify a purchase because it is useful, but there are many more that if they want something useful like a mug or bowl are more likely to visit Walmart or a Dollar Store. A while back I did a demo/talk for a group of gallery owners on glass workmanship. After the demo I thought it would be interesting to ask gallery owners their views on "When does craft become art?" They all agreed the more useful something is the less likely it is to be perceived as art. One of the gallery owners make a comment that I took to heart and passed on to other artisans. "I don't think people buy art to use as a fruit bowl". This comes back to market demand. The market is saturated with artisans making useful things like mugs and bowls and plates but not so filled with offerings of work that have no function other than decorative. When craft elevates to become art might be difficult to define but I've seen many examples of art turned into craft because the maker thought it needed to be "useful".

### **41. Amusing Sells**

In my many years of doing retail shows I learned to identify two things that clearly signalled a willingness to buy. If someone smiles when they look at a piece or if they say, "Isn't that cute" they are sending a clear signal they like it. When someone says, "Isn't that cute" you need only to step up and suggest they have excellent taste and should own it. People WILL buy things that amuse them and especially will buy things as gifts if they think it will amuse the recipient.

### **42. Art Critique**

You WILL be criticized. Some will be good and some will be bad. Some complimentary and some insulting. Ignore all of it. If you're trying to sell your work the ONLY criticism that has ANY relevance is that coming from someone willing to buy it. What anybody else thinks or says should be ignored. Let the marketplace decide if its good or bad. That also applies to price. Whether someone else thinks your price is too high or too low is irrelevant. You decide what it should be and let the market decide if it agrees. ESPECIALLY ignore criticism from self-designated experts. *"A critic is someone that owns a road map but doesn't know how to drive the car".*

### **43. Getting Started Selling**

I'm often asked, "When is my work good enough to sell? Simple answer. When someone is willing to buy it. Don't be afraid to offer it for sale. You're likely to find you like doing it. It can be difficult to get started so most artisans start small and work up incrementally.

- Personal – sell to friends and family.
- Flea Markets – they're low rent so low risk but get only low prices.
- Craft Shows – a little higher rent but much higher sales volume.
- Internet Sales – either your own website or something like Etsy.
- Sales Agents – will take care of all your sales for a percentage commission.
- Art Galleries – you give them your work to sell for a percentage of the selling price.
- Wholesale - a shop or gallery buys from you and resells at a higher price.

Where you choose to position yourself is entirely personal. If you want to keep all the selling price to yourself retail shows or internet selling might be your best choice. If you want to sell high price items art galleries might be a better option. If you don't want to be involved in the sales you might hire a sales agent to do it for you. If you want to generate a reliable steady income selling wholesale is usually the best.

#### **44. Inventory Advantage**

Artisans that prefer to sell retail and not wholesale because they get a higher price usually fail to consider the inventory cost saving advantage to selling wholesale. When you sell at a retail market you want to maximize your sales but can't predict what will sell so you make lots of stuff to take – always much more than you really expect to sell. You are packing around a lot of inventory with the risk some of it might not sell. You have the expense of handling all that inventory plus the risk of much of it becoming a “sunk cost” with goods that don't sell. When you sell wholesale you make only what has been ordered for purchase. The only inventory is work being made to fill orders.

#### **45. Prospecting**

Never underestimate the importance of prospecting. Whether you're prospecting for gold or prospecting for customers the objective is to find something valuable. If you want to sell your work new customers are extremely valuable. I have no idea how to prospect for gold but can suggest some ways to prospect for customers

- .Retail markets – be sure to have business cards with your website address
- Products cards attached to all your work.
- Bio handouts wherever you display your work for sale.
- Wholesale markets – exceptional to connect to wholesale buyers.
- Personal sales call. Often underestimated but always worthwhile.
- Directed mail. Mail directed to specific prospects.
- Community Bulletin Boards – especially valuable if you teach.
- Press releases – a nicely packaged press release can create great free advertising.

#### **46. Consignment Sales**

Consignment sale is when you give your work to a shop or gallery to display and sell for you. They take a percentage of the selling price as a commission and pay you after the work has sold. Most common commission is 30 to 40% but it could be less or more depending on what the seller demands. As with most things, there are advantages and disadvantages to consigning your work. For artisans that want to expand their market, or don't want to do retail shows, this can be a good option. However, when the shop owner doesn't have to pay for your work they have much less incentive to sell it and often just wanting to fill space. Too many consignment shops are poorly managed and too often just a hobby business. Also, they are notorious for going out of business leaving suppliers unpaid for work that sold and decline responsibility for anything damaged or stolen while in their possession. If you do decide to place your work on consignment be CERTAIN to have a signed contract clearly outlining responsibilities.

#### **47. Shelf Rental**

Appearing everywhere are places that offer to rent small display space for artisans. The usual arrangement is the artisan pays a fixed rent for display space and the venue takes a small percentage for handling any sales. It is a way to sell your work but almost always these venues are concerned only with renting space, indifferent to the mix of what is offered for sale and put little effort, if any, into connecting with customers. You might have your work on display alongside some complete crap. Also, like consignment sales, venues often refuse responsibility for anything damaged or stolen while in their possession.

#### **48. Co-operatives & Guilds**

When properly managed co-operatives and guilds work exceptionally well to help members improve and market their work - but ONLY if they are properly managed. Too often too many members participate only for what they can get from the group with little effort to contribute to help others. Often the primary focus of a group is to get some form of grant for financial support. This “what’s in it for me?” attitude discourages many of those with the most to offer from joining the group. Be careful who you decide to share with.

#### **49. Art Galleries**

A good gallery will put serious effort into representing you to prospective buyers and will be a working partner in marketing your work. It will almost introduce your work to customers willing to pay higher prices than at gift shops or public markets. However, just like consignment shops, many private art galleries are too often run as a hobby business or a side to other enterprises and not particularly concerned about making a profit. Just as a good gallery will put serious effort into which artists they choose to work with, you should put serious effort into choosing which gallery to partner with.

#### **50. Artist’s Portfolio**

If you want a gallery to represent or you apply for a grant of some kind you are expected to provide an Artist’s Portfolio that should include the following:

- List of accomplishments – awards, exhibitions, degrees, etc
- Examples of your best work
- Resume – history of your experience
- Artist’s Statement – what motivates you.

It should be organized, carefully categorized and look as professional as you can make it. This is your introduction to a prospective lifetime partner. Put some effort into making a good first impression. Even if you aren’t looking for gallery representation or applying for a grant, this is something you should have on your website.

#### **51. Personal Sales Calls**

One of the least used by artisans but often the most effective way to connect with a new account is a “cold call”. Just walk in and introduce yourself. Instead of waiting for a prospective buyer to approach you, take the time to select a venue you think would be a good fit to develop a working partnership to sell your work. Don’t choose one that would stroke your ego to be exhibited in and don’t choose one that already has work similar to yours. Select one that you honestly believe would benefit by adding what you offer to what they already sell. Don’t ask them to buy your work. Ask them to partner with you.

#### **52. Practicing Selling**

Some artisans love dealing with people and are great at it while others are terrible at it and try hard to avoid it. They hesitate doing retail shows and refuse to do sales calls. Maybe instead

of rejecting it they should treat it as a skill that, like all skills, can be acquired with practice? A technique that works well for all skill acquisition is practice. Practice roll playing like an actor playing a part. Get some friends or family to help you out. Have them play the part of a gift shop or gallery owner you're trying to convince to carry your work and they voice all their objections and reasons to reject. Then, switch and have them play the artisan while you play the hesitant shop owner so you better understand the view from the other side. Keep in mind it isn't just artisans like you looking for shop owners. Those shop owners (at least the smart ones) are also looking for new artisans. That's why they travel to visit retail and wholesale shows. They want to meet you as much as you want to meet them.

### **53. Professional Appearance**

When you visit a prospective buyer put extra effort into looking professional. It might not be fair or reasonable but the harsh reality is artisans have a reputation for being unreliable and flakey. The more effort you put into looking professional the more you do to remove the presumption of unreliability. You don't have to wear a suit and tie but leave the sweats, shorts and sandals at home. One of my favourite quotes from a shop owner about dealing with artists is, *"If they promise to deliver it on Monday, be sure you agree which month"*. Another favourite, *"I love selling handmade work, but gawd I hate dealing with the people that make it"*. If you want buyers to take you seriously, put serious effort into your appearance, It DOES matter.

### **54. Customer Connection**

If you're exhibiting at a retail show and make an effort to connect and chat with people you will sell a LOT more than if you just sit waiting for them to ask to buy. Initiate contact. Start a conversation. It could be as simple as, *"Hi, are you enjoying the show?"* If they show interest in something, reinforce their choice with something like, *"That's one of my favourite pieces" or "Those are fun to make"*. What you say isn't important as long as you do something to connect and not just sit silently detached. BUT... and this is important. Do NOT pounce on them like the ravenous vulture commission sales folk you see selling clothing and cars. Be delicate. Make the contact - then leave it to them to respond.

### **55. Make Your Booth Accessible**

A mistake many artisans make when setting up their display at markets is creating a wall of tables where customers stand on one side with them on the other side. For some shows with limited space there is no alternative but, if it is at all possible, it's a LOT better to configure your display with some kind of open entryway encouraging customers to walk into the display area and not stand outside looking in. It makes your booth seem like a little shop or gallery and more welcoming to their visit. Proving an opening is like sending out an invitation to visit.

### **56. Make Your Exhibit Special**

What you make should be unique to you. So should how you display it for sale. Don't copy what others make and don't copy how others display it. Make your display interesting. Add spot lights to accent feature items. Set up a laptop or TV monitor running videos of how it was made. If possible, be working doing live demos. Hang posters and signs. Make your display a full sensory experience. If you want people to think what you sell is special make your display special. Dare to be different.

### **57. No Small Customers**

There are lots of small orders but there are no small customers. Every customer deserves respect and consideration regardless of how much they spend. It's not just good humanity it's good business. Sometimes a small buyer brings in a big buyer. Many years ago I set up a retail plant shop for my wife. One of the regular customers was an elderly couple that came in to buy

a small house plant as a gift. They said they preferred to gift a live plant instead of cut flowers. I made a point of explaining how to care for whatever little plant they bought. Many times my wife commented on me spending so much time with a customer that only spend a few dollars. One day that elderly couple came in with a guy they introduced as their neighbour that had just built a solarium onto his house and wanted some tropical plants for it. He spent a few thousand dollars. Just a few months back I had been helping a young woman and her 8 year old daughter get started doing pottery and trying to do it on a very limited budget. She introduced me to her father who bought a \$40,000 commercial kiln for his business annealing metal. I've had many similar experiences in business. All customers deserve to be treated as special. It's the right thing to do – and sometimes a little minnow brings you a whale.

### **58. Internet Selling – Pros & Cons**

Internet sales have significantly replaced sales in physical shops but have not, and are unlikely to, completely replace them. Selling online has both advantages and disadvantages and should NOT be assumed to be an easy solution to increasing sales. Before deciding whether to market online or offline you would be wise to experiment with both before deciding which works best for you. You might even decide both work equally well. The key consideration should be how important is it for the buyer to see the work personally to be willing to buy. If someone has seen samples of your work on display they are more likely to be willing to order online but if they don't know you or your work they will be hesitant. That's why displaying at retail shows is a great way to encourage website orders. Just putting up a website expecting customer to rush to buy is a waste of time and money. If you want people to order from your website you must do something to get them to visit your website. Displaying your work in a retail market is an effective way to encourage a visit.

### **59. Website Wheel Hub**

Your website should be the center of your business. It will be most effective if your marketing efforts are designed to have your website work as the hub of a wheel. All your advertising and sales promotion activities run along the rim of the wheel being fed along the wheel spokes to the hub. The wheel hub drives the shaft that feeds revenue to your business. Any advertising you do is a spoke. Exhibiting at a retail show is a spoke. Handing out business card is a spoke. The more spokes you install the faster your wheel spins.

### **60. Website Convenience**

Make your website user friendly. Make it easy to navigate and easy to complete a purchase. Too many websites focus most on making it easy for the seller. They should instead be trying to make it easy for the buyer. I remember in the early days of website shopping carts reading an article that suggested 25% of purchases were abandoned because completing the transaction was too complicated. That's like having a store with check-out so inconvenient customers with a cart full of purchases get fed up waiting for you to take their money and walk away leaving the cart abandoned. A concern many online shoppers voice is difficulty finding things. When you set up a display to sell your work in a market you should have it neatly organized. That ESPECIALLY applies for your website. Make it easy for buyers to find what they want and make it easy for them to pay for they choose to buy. If your website has a search function don't just pick just one category to list something under. Take some time to think of all the categories where a customer might look for it and list it under all of them. Remember, it's supposed to be easy for the customer. The easier it is the more they will buy.

### **61. Not-for-Profit Organizations**

Working with "not-for-profit" organization can be an effective way to promote and sell your work but, just like dealing with sales agents, you should be careful which ones you choose to work

with. Many collectives register as a “not-for-profit” for tax purposes and to help qualify for public funding and work hard to help member artisans but there are individuals and groups of individuals that do this only to create jobs for themselves. Any income the organization might generate is used up as payroll for those running the organization. Such groups have limited incentive to actually sell the work of member artisans but are most often focused on how to qualify for a grant to fund their payroll. If you choose to work with a “not-for-profit” you should take some time to research why it’s a “not-for-profit” and what it is actually doing for it’s members. Be suspicious.

## **62. Arts Grants**

Public funded Arts Grants are intended to produce public art or to encourage artistic innovation but far too often getting grant funding is the primary motivation for individual artisans and arts groups. Who bother putting any effort into selling your work when you can get the government to fund it? Grants can be great when used to benefit the public but they are often far more harmful than helpful. They are a form of protectionism (like tariffs) that work mostly to support individuals or groups incapable of competing in the marketplace. For most arts organizations the most important members are those most skilled at applying for grants. When deciding whether or not to join any arts group you should consider carefully whether the group is designed to be an intersupportive cooperative or just a vehicle to tap into funding. Choose carefully.

## **Costing & Pricing – science & art**

### **63. Costing is Science – Pricing is Art**

Cost should not be confused with price. Cost is what you pay to make something. Price is what you get paid for making it. To determine costs you do the math.  $\text{Materials} + \text{Labour} + \text{Overhead} = \text{COST}$ . Simple math. Pricing is not so simple.  $\text{Cost} + \text{Markup} = \text{PRICE}$ . It can be more guesswork and more psychology than science. How much markup can you apply? What other suppliers must you compete with? How much demand is there for your product? Are you marketing it in the right way and in the right place? How much profit markup do you need or expect? Should you try to make a quick big profit or work with a small profit to build a steady market for your work? You must be creative in setting the right price. Too high a price will provide a higher profit but might reduce sales. A lower price will reduce profits but might increase sales. Where is the balance that benefits you most? Often it takes longer to learn how to price your work than it does to learn how to make it.

### **64. Determining Cost**

If you want to sell your work you should act like a professional. Professionals doesn’t guess at costs. They calculate them. Be professional. Know your costs. Keep careful records of both materials cost and work time. You should know the cost for each item you make. You should know how much the materials cost and know how long did it takes to make it. Leave the guesswork for amateurs. If you can learn how to make something you can learn how much it cost to make.

### **65. Costing Formulas**

Costing formulas that provide accurate measure are as mythical as leprechauns and unicorns. There are “guidelines” that can provide approximations but if you want accurate costing the ONLY system that works is the tried and true  $\text{Materials} + \text{Labour} + \text{Overhead}$ . Keep records and do the math. A costing guideline can help you make a best good guess and put you in the right ballpark but will NOT be acceptably accurate if accuracy matters. Everyone works differently. A system

that works for someone else won't necessarily work for you. The ONLY system that will work for you is the one you develop specifically for yourself. How you cost your work should be as unique to you as how you do your work.

#### **66. Four Factor**

The time it takes to make one is a lot more than it will be when you develop work efficiencies to make multiples. A guideline you can rely on to estimate labour cost reduction from work efficiency is the Four Factor. However long it takes you to make one piece you can rely on dividing that time by 4. Work efficiency isn't so much about working faster it is working more efficiently. For years in several different businesses I have relied on this to estimate production costs. I make one and carefully record the time then divide that time by 4 to guess how long it will take me to make in groups. If it took me 1 hour to make one I do my selling price projection based on an assumption labour will be 15 minutes each. It doesn't have to be hundreds. Often just making 10 or 12 at a time can make that much difference.

#### **67. Visualization Costing**

The best way to calculate how long it takes to make something is to record the actual time spent doing it - but sometimes that isn't possible for something you haven't yet done. A technique that works well to estimate time required is to mentally visualize doing it. Record the time you start. Mentally go through the process. It helps to accurately estimate time if you move your hands to go through the motion of doing it. It helps even more if you narrate what you're doing as if providing a voice over for a video. Visually completing the project then record the time you finished. Add a little extra time to allow for the expectation the real time may be a little more than the visualized time. It's not as accurate as recording actually doing it but it will give you a pretty good guess.

#### **68. Organization Cuts Costs**

I'm sure you've heard the slogan "Work smarter not harder". The key factor in working smarter is preparation and organization. Have everything prepared before you start with all the tools you will need and all the materials to be used. Have a plan ready in advance for how the work is to be done. What is the most efficient order? Should you do one item at a time to completion or divide the work into segments and sets? Compare it to cooking stir fry. Before you start to heat up the cooking pan you select what components you plan to use and cut everything into the appropriate size for cooking. You plan what order different components should be added to be sure everything is completed at the same time. That same need for planning and organization applies to making something you expect to sell. The more time you spend on preparation the less time you need spend on production. It's a smart investment.

#### **69. Sets & Segments**

Working in sets to minimize non-productive time is a very effective way to reduce labour costs. How much of your time is spent pausing after finishing one step then pausing getting ready to start the next step? Are you moving smoothly without interruptions from one step to the next? Compare it to typing. The secret to typing faster isn't to move your fingers faster but to reduce the pauses between finger movements so there is a smooth uninterrupted flow of movements. Planning the order work is to be done will improve your work efficiency but the most effective way to reduce time is to work in sets. Instead of making one item at a time from start to finish, work in sets. It could be small sets of just a few or large production runs. Divide the project into segments. Do the 1<sup>st</sup> segment for all the items – then the 2<sup>nd</sup> segment – then the 3<sup>rd</sup> etc. until all items are completely together.

## **70. SWAG**

Scientific Wild Assed Guess. There will be times you need to set a price for something that doesn't fit your usual costing or pricing methods so your only option is to make your best good guess. You SWAG it. With practice you can become pretty good at SWAG and you should take some time to develop some good guess guidelines. I've learned this is especially valuable for quote requests on something you haven't worked out firm prices. You can spend a lot of time working up an accurate price quote then learn the price is a world away from what was expected. A good SWAG for a quick quote will help eliminate wasting time with a client with an unrealistic expectation of what price to expect. A little time spent learning how to SWAG is a great investment.

## **71. Determining Price**

Deciding what prices to set to sell your work requires finding the best balance between your cost with what buyers will pay. Start with your cost. If you don't know your cost you're just guessing and gambling hoping to sell at a profit. How much profit do you need? How much do you want? How much is realistic? Is your work unique or original enough to justify a high price? Are your skills and work efficiencies good enough to justify a big markup over cost? What other artisans self for is a guideline but only amateurs rely on copying what others charge. Be professional. Know your costs and strategize your prices to reflect your costs and your needs.

## **72. Perceived Value**

Your cost is the most important factor in determining a selling price but that must be balanced with what a prospective buyer might be willing to pay. That is determined by "perceived value". What do buyers think it's worth? They don't care how much the materials cost and don't care how long it took you to make it. They only care whether or not they think it's worth the price you're asking. To justify a high price you must create a perceived high value. Diamonds were never rare but diamond sellers convinced people they were valuable by restricting supply. Artists did the same with limited edition prints. Technology has made that no longer realistic for both diamonds and prints. If limiting availability won't convince buyers to pay a high price you must find some other way to justify higher prices by increasing the perceived value of what you sell.

## **73. Increasing Perceived Value**

There are many factors that affect perceived value.

- Restricted supply. Basic economics. Limiting supply increases prices.
- Popularity. The more popular it is the more it is in demand.
- Location. How likely is it to be popular where offered for sale
- Venue. Low rent venues justify only low prices.
- Reputation. Are you an established artisan or relatively unknown?
- Originality. How unique is your work? Unique implies scarcity.
- Size. Larger is usually assumed to be more valuable.
- Complexity. Highly detailed items are assumed to be more valuable than simple.
- Workmanship. Is it exceptional or average?
- Decorative instead of utilitarian. Decorative usually commands higher prices.
- Marketing. How much effort do you into promoting sales?

## **74. Price = Value Delusion**

Many artisans claim by increasing a price you create the perception of higher value. That sometimes works, but only with fools too foolish to realize it's a deception. Informed buyers know the difference between low quality and high quality and also know how often sellers play the high price = high value game to justify higher prices. It might work in the short term to generate a few



better profits but in the long term it's more likely to harm your business by creating distrust. You have to decide whether you want to make a quick profit on a few sales or build a business relationship with repeat customers. Be honest about what is a fair and reasonable price and don't try to deceive your customers. Do buyers think higher price means higher value or do they think it means overcharging? Do they think lower price means lower value or do they think it means production efficiency?

## **75. Pricing Formulas**

Just as there are no reliably accurate costing formulas there are also no reliably accurate pricing formulas. Retailers usually apply a fixed percentage markup to sell at double their purchase price – mostly because they either don't know how to relate their costs to their selling price or are unwilling to put in the effort to learn how to accurately calculate them. You should forget about finding some easy to use reasonably accurate formula to price your work. You learned how to make what you sell. You should also learn how to cost and to price what you sell. As much as possible your prices should be as unique to you as your work.

## **76. Wholesale Discount**

For many years the standard wholesale price discount was 40% off retail but most retailers now have adopted what is referred to as “keystone” pricing expecting a 50% discount for them to sell retail at twice their purchase price. Some retailers, like jewelry stores, set retail price at 3 or 4 times their purchase cost. Wholesale pricing is now most often a fixed discount from retail price but in the past wholesale meant a different price for buying the “whole” item. For example, one price for material by the lineal foot and a different price for the whole roll or one price for a single jar of a product and another price for a whole caseload of jars. A steadily increasing number of businesses are returning to pricing that way instead of offering a percentage discount. If you sell wholesale you might consider adopting a variation of pricing by quantity instead of a percentage discount from retail.

## **77. Price Equalization**

Your wholesale buyer expects to sell for twice what they pay you. If you also sell retail you should sell at the same retail price they do. Because the wholesale price is half of the retail you might be tempted to sell privately or at markets for a little less than your wholesale customer's retail price thinking you're still getting a higher price than your wholesale price. **RESIST THAT URGE.** Do NOT do it. Not at all and not ever. When you do that you are unfairly putting yourself in competition with your wholesale customer. If they ever learn you did that they will almost certainly stop dealing with you. If others learn, or even suspect, you do it all the goodwill and trust it took years to build will be lost. **JUST DON'T DO IT.**

## **79. S.T.E.M**

**SPACE. TIME. EFFORT. MONEY.** This is a more sophisticated approach to pricing and often used by most big retailers like Costco and Walmart. Many artisans and resellers rely on a super-simple method of determining what to charge by just adding a fixed fee or percentage onto their costs. This is easy but it fails to allow for cost variables. The S.T.E.M. method considers the four factors that determine actual costs to more accurately calculate the true cost of business.

- **SPACE** The amount of space required either to produce the item or to store and display it for sale. A small item uses less space than a large one, so costs less for the space it uses.
- **TIME** Some things take little time to make or to sell, while others take longer. Something that sells quickly costs less to handle than something that takes longer.
- **EFFORT** Some things require more work to make or to sell. The more work that's required, the more it costs.

- **MONEY** This is the financial cost of providing the capital to make or to sell the product. Essentially, it's nothing more than the interest on borrowed money.

If you learn to use STEM pricing you have a more accurate understanding of your real costs. That understanding gives you a serious advantage over your competitors that rely more on a good guess or fixed percentage. Drop shipping is a perfect example of where STEM costing allows for significantly lower prices. There is zero SPACE cost, very little TIME and EFFORT expense and usually little or no MONEY required.

### **80. Price to Prevent Copying**

Techniques and tools that reduce your costs or designs that make your work unique will give you a competitive advantage that can both increase sales and expand profit margins. You should be rewarded for your skill and innovation but take care to not let greed replace need. Your prices should be based on what you need and what you believe is fair and not the most you think you can squeeze out of your customers. If you set your prices too high you leave opportunity for competitors to step in and copy your work.. Instead of setting the highest price you think you can get, set them high enough to make a good profit but still low enough to obstruct competition. When my company started making a variety of tools for sale under our Master Artisan label we had many products nobody else offered. Because they were unique we could have set prices with a very high profit margin but decided instead to set them high enough to make a nice profit but still low enough to discourage competitors from copying. That tactic worked so well we still don't have any significant competition after almost 20 years selling those tools and have maintained customers at retail, wholesale and distributor level.

### **81. Special Order Pricing**

When quoting a price for a special order of a large quantity be careful. It's not uncommon for a customer to ask for a price quote on a large quantity then later expect to order a smaller quantity at the price you quoted for the initial large lot. For example, they might ask for a price quote for 100 items then expect to order just 50 at that price. It's a ploy often used to cut the price. You quoted a unit price for a larger quantity that wouldn't apply for a smaller lot. Don't get played. When asked for volume prices it's a good practice to provide prices for different quantities. If asked for a price for 100 you should also quote prices for 10 and for 50. For quotes that require custom design and prep work I use a "1 plus" pricing. Quote a fixed "prototype" price for doing the first piece then a per piece for each piece after. A while back I was asked to quote on sandblasting 1200 beer mugs for a brewery doing a corporate promotion. I quoted \$100 for the first one to do the design artwork with \$8 for every one after. They agreed. I did the prototype and sent it to them. They confirmed the order for 1200 and a few months later ordered another 600. BUT... 90% of the time when I do a "1 plus quote" negotiations end and I avoided wasting time needlessly.

### **82. Camouflaging Price Increases**

We've all become used to constant price increases but nobody likes them. Your customers hate seeing prices rising but you often have no choice. Your costs go up so you either increase your prices or accept a reduced income. It helps if you camouflage a price increase by redesigning the product and replacing it with an improved or enhanced version at a new enhanced improved price. In all the years I sold finished pottery and glass art I never had a price increase but routinely redesigned for constant improvement. My customers didn't comment about me increasing prices but instead voiced pleasure at how there was always something new being offered. I turned a negative into a positive.

### **83. Price Psychology – Bill Denomination**

The higher the price the greater the resistance to buying but there is also a psychological response to price points that relate to bill denomination. Each bill denomination is a price point that creates a resistance barrier. The denomination will vary between different individuals but a price point resistance applies almost universally.

- \$5 is insignificant. No reason to hesitate.
- \$10 isn't important. You pay that for a cup of coffee.
- \$20 is not a significant expense but enough to pause a moment and question the purchase.
- \$50 calls for reconsideration and question if it's worth it and really wanted.
- \$100 is time for a serious second thought before buying.

This price psychology is important because buyers mentally round up and not down. A \$15 item isn't a little more than \$10, it's \$20 with some change. In most instances if a customer will pay \$15 they would as easily pay \$20 and will mentally wonder if it's worth \$20. When you set prices for your work you should target those price points as psychological boundaries and avoid pricing between them or just above one of those points.

### **84. Tier Pricing**

Manufacturer – Distributor – Wholesale – Retail

There is no fixed rule for setting a price discount at each tier but the most common practice is to set the wholesale price to retailers at 50% discount from suggested retail and distributor price to wholesalers another 33% off wholesale. Thus, a \$300 retail item would be \$150 wholesale and \$100 distributor. The manufacturer sells to the wholesaler for \$100 who sells it to the retailer for \$150 who sells it retail for \$300. One of the most effective ways to reduce your prices is to reduce your costs by finding a way to qualify to buy at a different tier. If you can't justify buying in the quantities required to buy at that level you might try creating a buyer's cooperative with other artisans and do a group buy. Another way is to become a reseller. I initially became a retailer of glass art and pottery supplies to buy at different tier to reduce costs for my own use.

### **85. Pricing Illusion**

The objective is to generate a profit from your work but sell it for more than it cost to make. You can apply a fixed percentage markup from cost or you can be flexible with that percentage using a different percentage markup for different items. A "pricing illusion" many big retailers use to create the impression all their prices are terrific compared to competitors is to intentionally apply a very low percentage markup on things that are easy to compare prices against other sellers but take a higher percentage markup on products not so easy to compare prices. If you can accurately calculate your costs you can do this for both retail and wholesale pricing.

### **86. Pivot Price**

There are many more considerations going into setting a selling price than just your cost and market demand. Sometimes there is your personal attachment to something you made. If you have an item you're especially pleased with you might choose to display it and mark "Not for Sale" - or you could adopt a "pivot" price. Set a price above which you prefer to part with it and have the money but below which you'd prefer to keep it. I've done that and had a few instances where I had a piece on display at a show with a "pivot" price set so high I was confident nobody would pay and it was one of the first things that sold.

## Management – doing it right

### 87. Best Advice

There are many things I think would be good advice for someone wanting to sell their work and I'm not sure what would be the one single best advice but I do believe the single worst advice anyone can offer you is "Don't sell cheap". Selling cheap is how you start. It's how you launch a business. Unless your goal is to build a personal collection of your own work you start by selling cheap. Start at the lowest price you can tolerate without feeling sick about it. Sell it. Have someone else own it. Make more stuff and sell more stuff – THEN gently increase your prices. Nobody ever started a business with high prices expecting to later reduce prices to encourage sales. When you start you're learning. When you go to school you don't get paid. Start your business the same way. If all you get back is the cost of your materials you are getting a free education. That ESPECIALLY applies if you have made stuff on speculation of sale. It is worth NOTHING until it sells. Economists use the term "sunk costs" to refer to a cost that has already been spent. Like a sunk ship, it's gone. If you have already invested the time and money to make something your costs are sunk and are now irrelevant. They're gone. If you then sell it for \$1 you make a \$1 profit. Big retailers like department stores usually have a 90 day sales deadline. If something hasn't sold within 90 days it is then considered a non-rent paying tenant taking up valuable space. It is now worthless. Either sell it cheap to recover something or give it away to make space for something else. You should do the same for your work. Don't own it. Sell it. If necessary, sell it cheap.

### 88. Art as a Business

Everything sold is either a product or a service. Art is not a third option. It's not special. The same economic principles that apply to selling a product or a service apply exactly the same to selling art. Too much supply pushes down prices and too high prices push down demand. If you offer a product or service that is similar to that offered by other suppliers and want people to buy it you must supply a reason to buy from you. There are three ways to do that:

- Offer something others don't have.
- Produce a better product or service.
- Provide a similar product at a lower price.

### 89. Business Plan

Many people will tell you to create a Business Plan before you start a new enterprise. That sounds like a fine idea but it works only in theory. In practice, you don't have nearly enough information to create any kind of a plan that is anything more than a good guess. You have to start off your new business by experimenting. Try everything you can think of to find out what works. Starting a new business is about invention and exploration. Suggesting you should start with a business plan is like asking an explorer to find a new path through the mountains but expect them to draw a map before they go. That's nonsense. You draw the map after the exploration and draw the business plan after the experiments. Later, after you've tried many different things and collected lots of information about what does and what doesn't work, you can create a Business Plan. Here is what I suggest is a plan that works as "The Entrepreneur's Business Plan" for creating a new business:

- Travel light. Take only essentials - that includes space, equipment, and inventory.
- Feed wherever possible. Use every income opportunity.
- Hunt constantly. Promote, promote, promote. Always be selling.

### 90. Business Strategy Misconceptions

Many aspiring entrepreneurs fail to understand how supply and demand affects price.

- Increasing supply will decrease prices. Because there is a large market for something does not mean there is a need for more supply. If the demand is now being met adding to the supply will encourage reduced prices.
- Restricting supply can increase prices but can as easily encourage users to switch to alternatives and thus reduce demand.
- Increasing prices will decrease demand by encouraging users to switch to alternatives.
- Reducing prices will increase demand by encouraging buyers to switch to the lower priced product.

## **91. Market Share**

There are two radically different theories on market sharing. The PIE THEORY is the belief the market is a fixed sized pie and everybody in that market gets a piece of that pie. If someone new comes into the market, they take some of that pie making your share smaller. The "pie theory" creates a fear that every new business coming into the market will reduce your share of the market and generates protectionism. The DAM THEORY believes the market is like boats floating in a lake created by a dam. New market participants help raise the dam level so the lake holds more water and floats more boats. This comes from believing bringing more participants into the market expands the entire market, making it larger and more profitable for everyone in it. JFK described it well when he said, "A rising tide floats all boats". Supporters of the PIE THEORY fear competition and support protectionism. Supporters of the DAM theory support expanding the market to create a bigger share for everyone and support cooperation and collaboration. They believe having more participants expands the market while simultaneously creating the competitive pressures that create innovation and improvement.

## **92. Create Momentum**

The hardest part of business isn't as much running a business as it is getting one started. A common mistake artisans make is being so concerned about the direction they want to go they fail to launch their business. Compare it to pushing a car. The hard part is to create momentum and get it to start rolling. Once it starts rolling it's easy to keep it rolling and even accelerate. If the wheels are pointed straight forward it's a LOT easier to get moving than if the wheels are turned. When you start a new business start with the wheels pointed straight ahead and get it moving forward. Worry about steering it later. First just get it moving. Generate revenue. Where it comes from is irrelevant. All revenue is good revenue. Just make stuff and sell it. Sell it cheap if you have to. You can get selective about what you make later when you have created enough momentum to keep your business rolling.

## **93. Materials vs Labour Contest**

When you first start something as a hobby, you're not concerned about how long it takes to make something but instead focused on how much all the tools and materials cost. The longer you enjoyed your hobby, the more this becomes a habit. If you later decide to try selling your work, you have trouble breaking this habit but you MUST break it. You expect to be compensated for all the materials you bought, but you also want to be paid for your time. The value of your time is always greater than the cost of the materials and better tools can reduce time. You have to switch. It is now a lot more important how long it takes to make, than how much all the materials cost. You will most often make the most money for your efforts, if you spend more on materials to reduce time spent.

## **94. Keep Records**

If you sell your work you have to keep sales and expense records for tax purposes but it's even more important to keep careful records of both materials cost and production times for your own

costing. You need to know (NOT GUESS) how much you spent on materials and how long it took to make something. Learn how to calculate the time and materials cost for each thing you make. If you don't know how to do cost calculations you should learn how. You spent time learning how to make the things you want to sell. You should spend time learning what they cost to make. That applies equally to what sells. Is there a pattern to what sells best? What items sell best? Is it different in different markets? Are sales seasonal? If you keep careful records you know your costs and know what sells. That knowledge allows you to make the best use of your time making the things that generate the most profit.

### **95. Assume Nothing**

Just because some "expert" tells you something won't work, don't assume they're right until you try it yourself. It could be, and often is, that expert just never tried it. Also don't assume the way you were first taught, is the "best" way until you have tried other ways. There are no "best" ways – just personal preferences. How can you decide which way you prefer and feel most comfortable with until you have tried them all? That applies as much in how you sell your work as in how you make it. I've experimented with a lot of unconventional ideas – and even some thoroughly weird ones. Many unexpected things not only worked but worked extremely well. Even the experiments that failed, taught me something - if only a good reason to not do it again.

### **96. One of Kind Deal Killer**

If you sell retail direct or consignment through a gallery or shop your customers love to hear what they bought is "one of kind" and never duplicated but if you sell wholesale non-duplication is a deal killer. If a shop is willing to take a risk and buy your work for resale they want to know if it sells they can get more just like it. If every item is "one of kind" unique, every item is another fresh risk. Businesses don't like risks. They like reliability, dependability and predictability. Imagine an artist buying a colour of paint to try and when wanting to buy more being told what they bought was "one of a kind" and not repeated. Making "one of a kind" is great if you sell retail but NOT if you sell wholesale.

### **97. Cut Costs or Increase Sales**

Cost cutting has steadily diminishing returns. The more you cut your costs the harder it is to find more ways to cut costs. That isn't necessarily true with working to increase sales. It's often the opposite. The more you increase sales the easier it gets to achieve more increases. Spending time to increase your sales is a much better time investment than working to cut your costs. You should try to do both but don't assume cutting costs is the best solution to improving profits.

### **98. Copyright Issues**

When you make things for sale it's important that you understand the applications and limitations of copyright issues – especially because there is a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding about copyright. Some factors you need to know:

- **Copyright is automatic.** It takes effect at first creation. Registering a copyright will make it easier to enforce it but isn't legally required.
- **Fair use.** The Copyright Act authorizes you to copy work for critique, discussion and teaching – but NOT for sale.
- **Originality.** To be protected by copyright the work must be original and not a variation of some other work. Just because you create something doesn't mean it's sufficiently original to be protected by copyright.
- **Derivative Copy.** A derivative copy is a design derived from a copyrighted work. Some individuals argue if you change it a percentage (pick a number) it is no longer copyright protected. Not true. If even as little as 1% is a copy it is copyright infringement.

- **Exemptions.** The Copyright Act specifically exempts ideas and techniques from copyright protection. They are open source and free for all to use as they please. Many artisans insist that either isn't true or shouldn't be true arguing it is immoral to copy someone else's techniques or ideas. You can decide for yourself if it is moral but the Copyright Act makes a point of specifically stating ideas and techniques are NOT protected.

## 99. Integrity Matters

- **Be Honest.** Tell the truth – even if it hurts. If someone asks you to do something and you're not sure you have the ability or the time, tell the truth. If you're willing to try, tell them you're not sure you can do it but are willing to try. If you made a mistake, admit it. If you can't meet the requested time, tell the truth and admit it. If it's something you just don't want to do, tell the truth and admit it.
- **Accept Responsibility.** The first rule in professional crisis management is ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY. Even if it's not your fault, accept responsibility. Take the hit. Never try to deflect blame to someone else. Everyone makes mistakes. The quality of your service won't be measured as much by whether or not you ever make mistakes but by what you do when you make them.
- **Keep Promises.** Avoid making any promises you suspect you can't keep but when you do make a promise do everything possible to keep it.
- **Play Fair.** There are small orders but there are no small customers. The same with suppliers. Be fair to all. Treat them the way you wish to be treated. There are good customers and good suppliers and bad customers and bad suppliers. If you have some bad suppliers or bad customers don't treat them differently - stop dealing with them.

## 100. Ask for Help

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Each of us at some time has needed help. Not everyone is willing to help you but many that have received help in the past are fully willing to pass it along and help you. Just ask. Reach out. Being a go it alone lone wolf individualist refusing to ask for help doesn't make you strong. It makes you stupid. Also, when you see a way to reach out to help others, do it. Don't think of your business as a solo event but instead as a team effort with everyone all working together cooperatively. ***"When we all share we all gain"***.

## Advertising – introducing yourself

### 101. Importance of Advertising

If you want people to buy your work you have to advertise to tell them you have work for sale and tell them how to buy it. There are many different ways to advertise. Some ways work well and others not so well. Not all ways work the same for everyone. Don't assume a promotion tactic that worked for someone else will work the same for you and don't assume what worked for one product or service will work the same for other products or services. You should start by experimenting with some different ways to find out what works best for you and what you want to sell. Some of the things to try include:

- Media Ads- magazine, newspaper, radio, television
- Bulletin boards - public and online
- Press Releases – newspaper and TV
- Email – build a mailing list
- Conventional Mail – it still works
- Direct sales contact – often the best

- Social media – the most popular
- Website – what else do you offer?
- Product Cards – attached to everything.
- Bio Posters – wherever you sell.
- Educational Posters – explain what you're doing.

### **102. Media Advertising**

At one time magazine, newspaper and TV ads were the most common and most effective ways to advertise. The internet has significantly reduced their value. Media advertising still works but is not nearly as cost effective as it was in the past. Buying media advertising you could be spending a lot of money for very little return benefit. If you want to try it, start with something small and be sure you have some way to monitor how well it's working. A good way to measure advertising effectiveness is to include a special offer that is advertised only with the ad and nowhere else.

### **103. Bulletin Boards**

Both physical and online bulletin boards work well to advertise any classes you offer or any special events you participate in. Many newspapers, arts groups, community centres and universities have bulletin boards you can post on. Take advantage of this super low cost way to advertise. You can print little posters or cards to pin up on local community boards and draft something to post online on social media sites.

### **104. Press Release**

Often the best advertising is the class you didn't pay anything for. Most newspapers and TV stations do public interest stories on local artists. Put together a press release package including a brief story about what you do along with a collection of photos. Send it out to your local newspaper and TV station. Reporters LOVE press releases. It makes their job easy. They didn't have to put any effort into finding story material. You just provided it for them. Almost always the material you compile into that press release is material you already have (or should have) on your website.

### **105. Email**

Build a mailing list and keep it updated. Use it routinely to keep your customers involved in what you're doing. What new products are you offering? Do you have any promotional specials? Where are you exhibiting? Let your customers know about anything new you're doing. If you do promotional specials that apply only to those on your list you make recipients feel special and you can monitor how effective your promotion is. For years I've made it a standard practice whenever I introduce a brand new product to offer in on my mailing list at 50% off regular retail price. I also used to have a "Free Freight Friday" on selective items offering free freight to anywhere on earth. I stopped that with covid but I think I might bring it back. It was fun, exceptionally well received and encouraged those on my mailing list to invite others to ask to join.

### **106. Conventional Mail**

There are so many advertising options it's hard to decide which to choose. Don't underestimate old-fashioned direct mail as an advertising tool. Email is more popular because it's easy but too often artisans reject old-fashioned postal mail because it's so rarely used anymore. The reason it's so rarely used anymore is exactly why you SHOULD use it. It might be a lot easier to put together an email list and send out a bulletin or flyer to everyone on the list but it's also too easy, and common, for recipients to delete it unread. We each get so little personally addressed mail it's almost certain the recipient will be curious enough to read it. It takes time to put together a



mailing list and buy the stamps to send out personally addressed envelopes but a directed mail campaign can be very effective.

### **107. Example – Direct Mail Effectiveness**

For years we have been going from Canada down to Seattle WA to buy pottery supplies for our own use and glass and equipment for resale. Some pottery friends asked us if I could help them out and pick up some stuff for them on our trips south. We've been selling glass art supplies for years so I thought expanding into pottery supplies would be a good fit and wondered how best to advertise this new offering. I had success selling finished work to galleries and gift shops by visiting them direct but that wouldn't be practical with all the schools, community centers and hobby potters so tried something different - visited Google and made a list of everyone within about 100 miles noted as a potter, pottery studio or offering pottery classes. Printed up 120 single page flyers, bought stamps and put the flyers in individually addressed envelopes to mail to everyone on the list. In advertising it's assumed a 10% response is an excellent return. I got 55% response. 55% of everyone I sent a flyer to phoned or emailed me. Some of them told friends and their friends told friends. That has grown to where we now have over 100 customers that routinely use our "Pottery Posse" co-op ordering. Not only is it an extra revenue source but the increased purchasing volume has allowed us to buy for our own use at a different level. A double win. We now sell enough pottery equipment we're experimenting with manufacturing tools and kilns. Snail mail works BECAUSE it's uncommon. We don't get much mail addressed personally so we're likely to be curious enough to open the envelope. You should try snail mail. It worked great for me. No reason it won't work the same for you.

### **108. Personal Visit**

When calling on retailers to sell glass art wholesale I made a point of avoiding shops that already sold glass art. I figured if they already had some they didn't need more. Instead I choose ones that had nothing like what I made. When you select someone to partner with to sell your work you should choose one you honestly believe would benefit by what you have. Walk in and proudly show them what you have that would be an appealing addition to what they already offer to their customers.

### **109. Example - Road Trip**

One of the smartest things I ever did was doing a sales trip from Canada to Mexico with my son Jason. We drove from the Canada/US border down the WA, OR and CA coast to San Diego making cold calls on galleries and gift shops. We'd do a drive around and select a place I thought would be a good prospect. I skipped any that already had a lot of glass art or I thought not a good fit with my work. Walked in with samples and a price list and made my pitch. Some were a firm no, some ambivalent and some interested although hesitant but many thanked me for coming to visit. The contacts made on the trip formed the foundation for a group of businesses now generating a solid consistent income. Cold calls work.

### **110. Practicing Sales Calls**

I had a simple and effective system for cold calls. Walk in with a small box of samples, place some on the counter and say, "If you can spare a couple of minutes I have a product line I think would be a good fit in your shop". I didn't always get an order but I did always get a chance to show my work and was often thanked for coming in. If you're uncomfortable making a cold call, practice role playing with some friends or family. Take turns being the artisan presenting your work then switch to being the shop owner hesitant to buy. Think of all the reasons a shop owner might have for declining and how you might respond to their hesitance. Offer some valid reasons buying your work would benefit them. Be sure to point out you are the maker and not a sales representative. If it's a firm NO thank them for their time but take care to leave open the possibility they might

reconsider. Many will thank you for coming in, some will be politely indifferent and some even outright rude. Welcome to reality. If you don't have a thick skin, grow one. Find another prospect. It's a big world with lots of alternatives. Your objective isn't just to make a sale but more to initiate a partnership working together. Choose your partners carefully.

### **111. Social Media**

Advertising on social media platforms is effective but requires ongoing upkeep. You have to spend a lot of time routinely refreshing and updating postings. Plus, you're competing with hundreds of other artisans advertising using the same platforms. If you keep track of how much time you spend trying to sell your work on social media you may find the benefit gained doesn't justify the time invested. Just as you have limited money to invest in advertising you even more have limited time. It's important you invest what you have where it is most likely to produce the best return. You should keep track of the time invested to make what you sell and do the same to keep track of the time you spend promoting it for sale.

### **112. Product Cards**

Print out and attach a product card to everything you display for sale. It can be a small simple card with just your name and how to contact you or it can be a complete bio with an elaborate detailed explanation of the product and how it was made. Big or small it should include how and where to learn more about you and your products and ESPECIALLY how to contact you to buy more. This is a very small expense that can produce a terrific investment return with increased sales.

### **113. Bio Cards – tell your story**

Introduce yourself to your audience with a card attached to each product or with a poster on display where your work is exhibited. It doesn't have to be a fully detailed resume like you might submit to a gallery when asking them to represent you or an elaborately embellished Artist's Statement. That resume and Artist's Statement should be on your website along with lots of photos of you and other work you do. Wherever your work is on display for sale you should include something that says hello to introduce yourself and tells people where you're from, what you're doing and why you're doing it. It could be something as simple as, *"Thanks for supporting my work.. I hope you like it as much as I liked making it."*

### **114. Business Cards**

Business cards aren't as popular, or as prolific, as in the past but they are still an effective low cost way to help customers contact you. When someone asks, "Do you sell wholesale? – Do you do commissions?", "Do you teach?", "Will you ship?", or whatever they ask, say "YES" and give them your card. If for ANY reason you want someone to contact you, give them your card. If you don't have product cards or bio pamphlets, attach a business card to everything you sell. Print LOTS of cards and use them everywhere. Business cards are an investment of a few pennies that can generate many dollars of revenue.

### **115. Educational Posters**

Artisans routinely complain the public isn't educated and doesn't understand the difficulty or complexity of what they do. Instead of complaining about the public being uneducated, why not provide some education? Put up a poster explaining it. Print up and handout pamphlets. Even better, set up a tablet or laptop running demonstration videos. Include those videos along with lots of photos on your website. If you want the public to be educated about what you do, make it your responsibility to provide that education.

### **116. Shipping Poster**

Offering free or discounted shipping for retail customers or drop shipping for wholesale customers is a big deal and can significantly boost your sales. If you provide free shipping for retail sales be sure you tell everyone you offer it and explain clearly when it applies. If you provide drop shipping for your wholesale customers provide them with a poster to help them tell their customers shipping service is available. For shops that sell glass or pottery I provide a small poster that says, *"Are you worried about how to get it home? Don't be. Let us do it for you"*. There is no question that has worked to convince a lot more people to buy.

### **117. Display Banners**

"Go big or go home". If you're displaying work for sale at a retail market try to make your exhibit look more like a shop than a street vendor. Put up signs. Vinyl banners that can be rolled up for transport are inexpensive and a great way to advertise loud and proud who you are and what you offer.

### **118. Sign Your Work**

You should sign your work. Even if it's just your initials etched in or painted on somewhere. Signing your work tells your customer you are proud enough of what you made to put your name on it. It can be just your name or you can create a unique signature like a logo or trademark. Such signatures are usually called a "Maker's Mark". There are lots of ways to sign your work. Whichever way you choose, take credit for what you make by signing it. Leave your mark.

### **119. Retail Shows**

Exhibiting your work for sale at retail markets works exceptionally well as advertising for wholesale customers and commissions. If you offer products or services other than the work being displayed for sale you should be sure to advertise it. You could wait until someone asks or you might display some signs advertising it. When I did retail markets I had printed out one page handouts explaining my terms and conditions for wholesale sales. When someone asked I gave them a handout and told them to contact me after the show. For example, for commissions a 50% deposit was expected with the order and balance on delivery. For wholesale the basic wholesale price is 50% off retail with a minimum \$500 for first order and full payment on delivery. Any credit terms apply only on later orders. No consignment sales but open credit return option. Advertising clear terms and conditions is an important part of marketing and management.

### **120. Wholesale Shows**

Wholesale shows are closed to the public with exhibitors displaying samples of their work to take orders from buyers but these shows can also be effective advertising for other products and services not being exhibited. If you offer classes or any product or service not being sold at the show it's still a good place to advertise what you offer. Put up signs and print up brochures or pamphlets for handout.

### **121. Website – the Marketing Hub**

If you are selling your work everyone expects you to have a website of some kind. Without one customers will think you are just a hobbyist playing at selling a few things and not a serious artisan. It doesn't have to be a giant site with an elaborate shopping cart (although having a shopping cart makes it a lot easier for customers to buy) but you should have a website to send customers to. All the advertising you do should be designed to send buyers to your website where they can make a purchase. Your website will only generate sales if you do something to convince people to visit it and show prospective customers what all other products and services you offer. It's where you can tell them about you and your products. It's where all your advertising efforts can be into income generating sales. Your website is an elaborate pamphlet

that tells everyone about you, what you do and what you offer. If you sell wholesale it's a good practice to configure your website so your wholesale customer can copy and paste from it, or just imbed a link to parts of it, on their website. Remember - your wholesale customer is your partner with a shared objective to sell your work. Help them do that.

### **122. Working with Schools**

Whether it's a group of kindergarten kids just having fun or university level art classes seriously interested in what you teach or supply, schools can be excellent venues to promote your business and make contact with new prospective customers. Reach out to your local schools and offer to work with them either to help with existing classes or help them start new ones. I've been working with several schools at varying grade levels demonstrating how mixing science, shop and art combines chemistry and physics to create glass art and pottery. It has proven to be exceptionally effective teaching problem solving and logical analysis. "Why does this happen?" "What happens if I do this?" "How do I avoid failures?" "How can I do it better or faster?" "How can I predict what will happen?" If you can teach kids how to apply logic and reason to solve problems you have found the magic bullet every educator is searching for.

### **123. Prospecting – the Key to Selling**

Every professional sales person will tell you that prospecting is the most important part of sales. You can have effective advertising and an efficient marketing program but they have no value without places to use them. How do you find new customers? Where should you advertise? Some things to do:

- Direct contact is always best. Make personal calls.
- Business cards are essential. Distribute them freely everywhere.
- Mail outs can be exceptionally effective
- Bulletin boards are great for advertising commissions, showings and classes.
- Print advertising still works but not nearly as well as in the past.
- Public Announcements can produce better results than print advertising.
- Retail Markets are effective for advertising classes and custom commissions.
- Social Media like FaceBook and Pinterest work well to send people to your website but they are a lot of work.
- A Website is essential. Put serious effort into sending customers to it.

You will find some ways work better than others but what always works best is to try all of them.

### **124. Don't be Shy**

Shy is mostly just nervous and hesitant but is too often interpreted as ashamed. Don't be shy about advertising to tell people about yourself, what you do and why you do it. Show the world you're proud of what you do and proud of what you make. Advertise it everywhere. Stand loud and proud and strut your stuff.

### **125. Monetizing**

Not everything can be monetized. Don't expect everything you do will generate a profit or provide a financial benefit. Advertising isn't only about making money. Building community connection and good will can be as valuable as extra sales and often that good will provides a long term benefit it's hard to put a dollar value on. Get involved with community groups – not for what you can get from them but for what you can give to them. When you help school groups you're likely to turn parents into customers. When you openly offer help to others you create trust and credibility that encourages others to support you.

## Business Hazard Warnings – inevitable issues

### 126. Fear

It's reasonable to be cautious – but not reasonable to let fear prevent you from trying. Paying attention to risk is smart. Especially smart is planning for possible problems and having plans for what to do if problems happen. What you **SHOULD** be afraid of is decision paralysis that needlessly delays dealing with problems. Some problems are a surprise but most are inevitable. Plan for problems and have ideas prepared for how to deal with them.

### 127. Disappointment

Some disappointment is inevitable. Some things work and some things don't work. The harsh and bitter reality is there are a lot more things that don't work than ones that do work. Live with it. Expect to have problems and expect to make mistakes. Don't think of those problems as obstacles but as educational events. In my business classes I'm often asked, "How do you know what will sell?" My answer, *"I've been doing this a long time and got pretty good at guessing what will and what won't sell. I've got so good at guessing I'm now only wrong 9 times out of 10"*. 90% of everything I try is only a learning experience.

### 128. Frustration

It's easy to get frustrated when you keep trying hard and working hard and the things you're making aren't coming together the way you expect them to or they came out fine but few people are buying them. Frustration can push you into doing something foolish – either taking some unnecessary risks or even deciding to quit. Frustration is inevitable but allowing it to push you into doing something rash is a choice. A poor choice. Make smart choices. Deal with frustration by adopting stubborn persistence. The best way to win is by refusing to quit.

### 129. Unexpected Storms

Running a business is a lot like dealing with the weather. Sometimes it's warm, sunny and calm but other times it can be cold, wet and windy. Nasty storms can come when least expected and sometimes when you are least prepared. Hold onto that old and apt saying, "Hope for the best but plan for the worst". Be prepared. Expect storms. Even if you think you're in a comfortable place where storms don't happen - be ready to hunker down and ride out a hurricane. Be prepared but be positive. All storms eventually end.

### 130. Money Tide

Like the tide coming in then going out, income flows in and flows out. But, unlike the tide, it's not steady and not predictable. Sometimes it fails to flow in when you need it to and often it flows out when you least want it to. You must allow for this and expect an erratic tidal exchange. In every business, cash flow is often a major problem. Try to have a little cushion put aside and, like waiting for a storm to end, wait for the tide to change.

### 131. Ego

Ego can be an effective motivator but it can also be seriously destructive. Too often artisans are more concerned about being praised than being paid. – and that can be the reason they aren't being paid. I've known many artisans that were so concerned about being labelled an artist they failed to put in the needed effort to produce work that could generate a comfortable income. Sometimes you have to choose between pay or praise.

### **132. Comfort Zone**

Embracing the security of your comfort zone can, and often does, cause business failure. If you choose to stay only in your comfort zone where everything is easy and predictable, you anchor yourself to the past and remain stuck in place while others move forward into the future. Step outside. Try new things. Experiment. Accept change. If you insist on staying where it's comfortable you fall behind while others move ahead. The only time you get to coast is when you go downhill.

### **133. Change**

Change is inevitable. You can't stop it so it's stupid to resist it. It's stupid to resist change but it's smart to predict and prepare for it. Be prepared to pivot and adapt to change. Change can be good. Change can be beneficial. Where there is change there is opportunity. You should anticipate change and have plans in place for how to take advantage of those opportunities.\

### **134. Negativity**

You WILL have family and friends tell you what you hope to do won't work – that your aspirations are unrealistic. Many will tell you it's certain to fail and you should quit and stop wasting your time. Don't listen to the negatives. Identify potential problems and plan for how to deal with them but do NOT be guided by them. Focus on the positives. Instead of expecting your business to fail, plan for how to make it work.

### **135. Insults and Accusations**

Some individuals will be happy for you when your work sells and your business grows but some others will be jealous of your success. Some will even be openly antagonistic and insulting. Some may complain your prices are too low and unfair to others while others complain your prices are too high and unrealistic. You should refuse to get involved with such people. Ignore them and keep busy making and selling your work and building your business.

### **136. Misunderstandings**

Most misunderstandings are caused by poor communications. Sometimes it's because your customer wasn't fully aware of your terms and conditions but sometimes it's because you failed to fully explain what you expect. Either way, YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE for communicating and explaining your terms and conditions. Tell your customer what you expect from them and clearly explain what you will do and will not do.

- When do you expect to get paid?
- Is there a minimum order requirement?
- Do you offer territorial exclusivity?
- How much advance time do you need to fill an order?
- Do you offer a return or credit exchange option?
- What discounts apply?

Misunderstandings harm relationships. The best way to avoid them is by you taking responsibility to clearly communicate what you expect.

### **137. Copiers**

You invested time and money experimenting and practicing to develop new techniques and create new designs then learn others are copying your work and claiming it as their own. It sucks but it happens. Being copied is inevitable. The only time your work won't be copied is when it is such crap nobody wants to copy it. When someone copies your work you have to decide if fighting it is worth the trouble or should you just ignore it. Truly creative individuals are usually too focused on what they plan to do next to be worried about someone copying what they did last.

### **138. Copyright Fight or Forfeit**

If you do have something like a trademark or copyright that you want to not be copied you must fight to protect it. If you fail to protect it you forfeit ownership and it becomes public domain free for all to use. Examples of this are the company name Xerox that has come to be used as a generic reference for photocopies or Thermos that has come to be used as a generic term for vacuum bottles. By failing to fight to protect the use of their name, Xerox and Thermos lost the right to claim exclusive ownership to their name. That's why companies like Disney are so ferocious about protecting their Copyrights and Trademarks and why if you make something that copies anyone's logo or trademark (like a sports team logo) without permission you can be charged with theft.

### **139. Copyright Misconceptions.**

Many people claim you can get around copyright restrictions by changing some percentage of the original copyright. NOT TRUE. Creating something "inspired by" a copyrighted design is acceptable but if your new creation includes ANY percentage of the copyrighted material it is considered to be a "derivative copy" and is still protected by the original copyright.

### **140. Exemptions to Copyright**

There are circumstances that allow you to copy something that is copyright protected. These are called "Fair Use" and include teaching, criticism, comment, news reporting, scholarship and research. Examples where Fair Use would apply to an artisan would be showing a photo of a work or a video of how it was made to teach how it was made or for discussion or critique. You could make a copy of a copyrighted work for yourself but if you sell it or exchange it for anything of value you are guilty of copyright theft.

### **141. Copy Cops & Copy Cats**

We frequently see public complaints about work being copied. There are 4 problems with such complaints:

1. The copy cops inflict more harm than the copycats. Newcomers learn new techniques by copying the work of others. They should be encouraged to do that. They should even be encouraged to display their efforts for critique and suggested improvement. If instead, they're publicly ridiculed and attacked for their efforts, they'll stop trying new things and stop improving their work.
2. There's an assumption that the originator "owns" the exclusive rights to an idea or concept or design but if it isn't original enough to be protected by copyright, it is open for all to use. That ESPECIALLY applies to techniques which are NOT protected by Copyright.
3. When an artist expects to live off old designs instead of steadily creating new designs they stagnate. This leads to complacency and mediocrity. Competition benefits everyone. The only time you get to coast is when you go downhill.
4. Public accusations of "copier, copier, copier" invariably unjustly and unfairly label the individual being accused. This degenerates into a public witch hunt with the inevitable public burning at the stake.

### **142. Price Cutters**

You bought the materials and put in time to make things to be offered for sale and hope to be paid for your time. That's reasonable. That's how business works. How disturbing to find there are other artisans making stuff for sale that will donate their time and sell it for only the materials cost. How do you compete with someone willing to work free? You compete by making something those others don't make and by making something of a high enough quality customers will pay the prices you ask. There is nothing wrong with beginners selling at low prices to fund a hobby or to finance a learning experience. It's how many got started. Trades apprenticeships

traditionally start at 50% pay. Interns work free. When you go to school for an education you don't get paid for your time. In most instances you pay for it. The singer Celine Dion gets paid \$1 million for an appearance – but started her career working free in small taverns to gain experience. Many artisans started by working cheap or free. If you can't compete with aspiring artisans willing to work cheap you should put more effort into upgrading your work so it doesn't compare with what they sell.

### **143. Website Shopping Carts**

Many websites are poorly organized and difficult to use. Often even when a purchase is selected it can be so complicated to complete the purchase the sale collapses in process of trying to pay for it. It's like someone with a cart full of goods lining up to pay for everything at the checkout and getting so frustrated they just walk away leaving the cart. You might have made a great product, advertised it effectively and displayed it beautifully – then lost the sale because you made it needlessly difficult to pay for. If you have a Shopping Cart on your website you should put serious effort into making it easy to find things and especially easy to buy them. Have you tried using your cart as a buyer? Is it easy to find things? Easy to complete the sale? Shopping Carts should be designed to make it easy for the customer - NOT the seller.

### **144. Consignment - Pros & Cons**

For many artisans the only way to start selling their work through retail shops is placing it on consignment. As with almost all things, there are both positives and negatives to selling your work on consignment.

#### **Positive**

- Often the only option for a new artisan wanting to try selling wholesale.
- Get a higher percentage of the selling price than the usual 50% for wholesale.

#### **Negative**

- Your investment in time and materials is tied up until the work is sold.
- Risk of loss or damage while in consignment shop possession.
- Risk of consignment shop going out of business leaving you unpaid.
- Consignment shops are too often hobby businesses unaware of what sells.
- Consignment shops have less inducement to generating sales.

If you do place your work someplace on consignment, be certain to check the history of the outlet and always get a written agreement. If a prospective wholesale customer is nervous about trying out your product for the first time, it's perfectly reasonable for them to want the first order on consignment. An alternative is to instead offer the first order "on trial". Tell them the first order is on trial - for example 30 days. After 30 days if they aren't satisfied your work is selling for them, they pay for whatever they sold and return the remainder to you. If they are satisfied and want to continue selling your work they pay for the total order - and you now have a permanent retail representative. Be suspicious of anyone that refuses such an offer.

### **145. Sales Agents**

A sales agent working to establish and manage your sales can be a big help freeing you to focus on creating and producing product. A good agent can be the key to a successful business, but a poor agent can cause it to collapse. A sales agent should be working as a partner. Always be careful who you choose as a partner.

#### **Positive**

- frees you to work on making stuff and not diverting time to sales and marketing.

#### **Negative**

- agent's fee (usually 10 - 15%) cut into your profits.
- agents are too often interested only in building a stable of suppliers to expand orders from their existing contacts and not so interested in finding new outlets.\



#### **146. Product Return Option**

You can increase sales by allowing wholesale customers the option to return for credit anything they have been unable to sell. This will increase your sales but it's important to carefully manage it.

##### **Positive**

- encourages buyers to experiment with items they otherwise wouldn't try.
- builds a strong interdependent partnership-like relationship with your customer.

##### **Negative**

- Can easily be abused if you don't control it with clearly defined limits and conditions. For example, it must be in the original condition and not damaged.

#### **147. Territorial Exclusivity**

Every customer wants this option but not all deserve it. Granting your customer the protected exclusive right to display and sell your work in a specific place or area has both advantages and disadvantages.

##### **Positive**

Having territorial exclusivity encourages a shop owner to feature and promote your work and discourages them from buying from anyone with anything similar to yours.

##### **Negative**

Granting exclusivity restricts who else you can sell to.

If you decide to grant territorial exclusivity you should take some time to prevent possible misunderstandings by clearly specifying what territory is covered and what your sales expectations are to ensure exclusivity. It's reasonable to restrict to a town or district and reasonable to expect a minimum sales volume. You might even ask for a non-compete mutual agreement to not sell other work too similar to yours. For any agreement to work it must be fair to all involved.

#### **148. Insurance Issues**

Even a small accident or tiny negligence can end your business. Insuring against accident and theft is important but equally important (maybe even more important) is liability insurance. There is always a risk of an accident and always individuals that will use any available opportunity to sue you. Many retail markets require vendors to provide proof of liability insurance. It's common for loan providers and landlords to require proof of liability insurance as a pre-condition. Even if it isn't required, it's a wise practice to protect yourself with both personal and product liability insurance.

#### **149. Proprietorship or Incorporation.**

Should you incorporate your business?

##### **Positive**

- incorporating provides liability risk protection with liability restricted to the business.
- you appear more legitimate making it easier to get loans and attract investors
- business perpetuates even without you.
- provides tax advantages with more allowable deductions.

##### **Negative**

- can be moderately expensive to set up.
- requires more extensive record keeping.
- corporate tax returns much more difficult than personal.

#### **150. Supply Chain Issues**

Most businesses are now suffering supply chain issues they hadn't expected and hadn't

planned for.

- Unexpected price increases you might not be able to pass on.
- Unexpected materials shortages with some supplies no longer readily available.
- Lead time extensions that now take longer to get supplies shipped.
- Transportation delays that can take longer to get orders delivered.

These are issues you usually have no control over. Your only protection is to abandon the historical reliance on “just in time” delivery with small frequent orders and pivot instead to larger orders to maintain a back up inventory of supplies and build in allowance for longer resupply times.

### **151. Impatience**

There are many kinds of impatience – all of them destructive. There is the impatience that encourages short cuts and taking needless risks and there is the impatience that encourages skipping important steps. One especially harmful kind of impatience for artisans is avoiding the hard work to test alternatives by instead just jumping into different things hoping for a happy accident. It's the difference between putting in the time and effort to test alternatives and buying a lottery ticket hoping to get a winner. Sometimes that works and you get a winning ticket but far more often it prevents discovering how surprisingly often the way least expected turns out to be the best way. Progress isn't made by a series of happy accidents but by building a foundation of hard work and testing alternatives. Interesting thing about luck. It seems the harder I work the luckier I get.

## **Teaching – sharing your knowledge**

### **152. Passion or Pay?**

Why do you want to teach? Is it passion or pay? Your motives for teaching will directly affect how effective you are as a teacher. Do you want to teach for the income or because you enjoy teaching and want to share your skills, knowledge and abilities with others? Be honest.

### **153. Teaching Talent**

Teaching isn't a talent. It's a skill - a skill you can learn like any other skill if you are willing to put some effort into acquiring it. It's especially important to understand being able to do something well does not mean you are qualified to teach it. Some exceptionally good artisans are exceptionally poor teachers. If you want to be a good teacher you need to learn how to be a good teacher.

### **154. Teaching Skills**

The skills needed to be an effective teacher are a lot like the skills needed to be an effective manager.

- Patience. Patience isn't a natural talent but a skill that can be learned. The key to acquiring that skill is learning how to avoid or manage things that trigger your impatience.
- Planning. Planning makes the difference between controlling what happens and just allowing it to happen.
- Preparation. Advance preparation is an investment in classroom efficiency.
- Organization. An organized class minimizes problems.
- Managing. Controlling and managing your class ensures positive results..

- Presentation. Your personal presentation will make the difference between average and exceptional.

### **155. Impatience Triggers**

What irritates you? Nobody has unlimited patience. Each of us have things that piss us off. It might be a student that is completely unprepared. It might one that talks too much. It might any number of things that bother you. Every class has problem students. It helps a LOT if you prepare for things that trigger your impatience and plan in advance how to deal with them.

- Recognize - recognize your triggers. What irritates you?
- Understand – accept some things piss you off.
- Manage – knowing what irritates you will make it easier to control and manage triggers.
- Plan – have a plan for dealing with things that irritate you.
- Avoid – avoiding things that set off your triggers makes it easier to manage them.

### **156. Planning a Class.**

The more you plan how to set up and run your class the more effective your class will be and the more your students will benefit from your class.

- Size – how many students can you handle? You want to maximize revenue with a big class but the more in the class the harder it is to provide any individual attention.
- Structure - will your class be a broad overview or will it be a narrow specialization?
- Focus – will it be to teach general techniques or to make a specific project?
- Age – what age group is your class intended for? Can it be mixed ages?
- Skill level – will it be for beginners, intermediate, advanced or mixed?
- Projects or lessons – is the class to focus on specific projects or more on general techniques?
- Materials – are materials provided or are students expected to provide their own or buy from you?
- Tools – do you provide everything or are students expected to provide their own
- Demos – will you be doing live demonstrations or using videos.
- Class outlines – do they fully explain what the class does and does not cover?
- Class fees – high fees will increase your revenue but discourage participation.

### **157. Class Preparation**

Preparing for a class is liking preparing to cook stir fry. You don't start cooking and cutting up the components while you're cooking but instead have everything prepared before you start so you're not scampering about collecting stuff and setting up during the class.

- Facilities – check to ensure the space is suitable for what you plan to teach. Is there adequate lighting and ventilation? Is the space big enough for the class size? Is there sufficient heat and/or air conditioning?
- Tools & Equipment – is everything you need available? Will you provide everything or expect participants to provide their own? Do you have extra in case a student forgets theirs? You should have a checklist to work from to be sure you didn't miss something important.
- Materials – do you have enough materials? Do you have extra in case you underestimated how much will be needed?. *“Better to have and not need than to need and not have”*
- Handouts – do you have everything printed ahead with enough copies for everyone?
- Demonstrations – do your have videos to play or samples to demonstrate what will be made?

- Safety – do you have a first aid kit? If you're working with live flame do you have fire extinguishers?
- If you make a list of everything you expect to need for your glass and prepare an Instructor Kit before the class you can be sure you have everything you need. It should include:
- Any tools and materials you expect to need. Take extra everything.
- A class outline as a guide for you. It's easy to get sidetracked or diverted in a class and miss something – maybe something important. For many things it's important they be demonstrated or explained in a particular order. Mixing it up can be confusing for your students. Preparing class outline for you to follow as a guide ensures you stay on track and don't miss anything.
- Anything you need for demos (samples, videos, etc)

### **158. Instructor Kit**

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- Preparing a class outline for you to follow as a guide ensures you stay on track and don't miss anything.
- Anything you need for demos (samples, videos, etc)

### **159. Student Kit**

Make a list of everything you think each student will need for your class and prepare a Student Kit for each student. It should include:

- Any tools needed.
- Any materials needed.
- A handout tutorial (to eliminate any need for students to take notes).
- A safety guide explaining risks to avoid.

### **160. Class Organization**

The more organized your class is the more efficiently it runs and the more effectively it provides what your students expect. An organized class should include:

- Videos or live demonstration. Will students be making something in the class or will you just be doing demonstrations and playing videos?
- Will the class be continuous or is it in segments for a multi-step tutorial or project? Have you planned a time schedule for each step?
- Tools and equipment use. Do you have enough tools or equipment to provide one for each student or will they take turns? Do you have a time allowance for usage?
- Demonstrations and videos. Do you have a schedule to ensure they are done in the most effective sequence?

### **161. Managing the Class**

Managing is controlling what happens.

- Adapt – as best you can, adapt to each student's needs and expectations.
- Anticipate – anticipate possible problems and be ready for them.

- Time estimate – calculate in advance how long the class should take and allow for your students to take longer than you would and especially to allow for some students work slower than others.
- Time management – if it's a multi-stage tutorial it's important each student complete each stage before moving on to the next.. You might provide a 5 or 10 minute notice to warn of a need to finish each stage.
- Tool use – students can ruin tools if they don't know proper use. If you haven't ensured everyone knows proper tool use either include instructions in your glass or restrict their use. That especially applies to any diamond cutting, drilling or grinding equipment.
- Materials use – be sure you provide extra but also watch students needlessly wasting materials.
- Class questions. Encourage students to ask question during the class to avoid dealing with them after the class. That gives other students a chance to share in the discussion and allows you time to clean up after the class.

## **162. Be an Effective Teacher**

Help your students but don't do their work for them.

- Make suggestions but do not make decisions for them.
- Be enthusiastic. Make your students believe you're happy to be here and love what you're teaching.
- Be entertaining. Mix your class up with photos and videos. Sprinkle in some humour and anecdotes.
- Suggest - not decide. Avoid making choices and decisions for students. Encourage them to make their own decisions.
- Identify skill levels. Observe your students and watch for where some lack the expected skills and need extra help.
- Cruise the class. Try to help those that need help the most but also try to offer encouragement and suggestions to every student.
- Become the expert. Take time to learn as much as you can to be able to answer any questions asked.
- Tell the truth. If you don't know the answer to a question admit it. Suggest where the answer might be found or, even better, offer to find out and provide the answer later.

## **163. Be Exceptional**

A good teacher will answer every question a student asks. A great teacher will provide answers to questions the student didn't know they should ask.

- Teach Alternatives - A good teacher won't just teach their personal favourite methods and techniques but will introduce the alternatives and let the student select their favourite
- Encourage experimentation - sometimes the best way to do something is the way you haven't tried yet.
- Explain technical terms and avoid jargon as much as possible.
- Justify your comments. If you suggest something be prepared to justify it. Explain why.
- Use the "Coach Approach". Motivate to succeed by building small incremental success.
- Employ "Socratic" teaching. Show where to find answer and how to do tests.
- Encourage failure acceptance – not everything works. Some failure is inevitable.
- Anticipate possible problems and have a plan for how to deal with them.
- Reinforce. Each lesson should be a 4 step process. Tell – Show – Do – Review.

#### **164. Ethical Teacher's Guidelines**

A few years back I got together with a group of other instructors teaching at Las Vegas Glass Craft Expo where we had a brainstorming session about how we thought a teacher should behave. This is what we came up with:

- Teach first, sell second. You should be there to teach and not sell product.
- Teach all alternatives and not just your personal preferences.
- Teach everything you know. No trade secrets. Withhold nothing.,
- Be honest. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it.
- Be prepared. Plan your classes to be efficient and effective.
- Listen actively. Identify each student's need and try to meet them.
- Be fair to all. Treat all students equally. Have no favourites.
- Create participation. Get everyone involved.,
- As much as possible, instructor should provide everything. Students should not be expected to provide tools and materials.

#### **165. Live Class vs Online**

Many people insist live classes are always better than online classes but perhaps fail to recognize the balance of advantages and disadvantages for each with a steadily growing support for online classes.

##### **Live class advantage**

- In person demos. Instructor can provide live demos.
- Q&A. Instructor can answer questions during the demo.
- Detection/correction. Instructor can detect where a student is having trouble and can step in to help.
- Interaction. There is direct in-person interaction between the student and instructor.
- Materials & tools can be provided. Anything needed for the class is available.

##### **Online class advantage**

- Better demo perspective. Everyone gets a closeup view of demonstrations.
- Demonstration variation. Videos can include slow motion, stop action and different angle views.
- Condensed time videos. A project that might take hours or days to complete can be video edited into a few minutes.
- Lower cost. It costs less to produce an online class so the cost reduction can be passed on as a lower class fee.
- Larger classes allow the instructor to offer lower fees..
- No travel required. It doesn't matter where you live.
- Less distraction. The instructor can focus on the teaching material without any distractions.
- Better time schedule. The instructor can better manage time schedule.

#### **166. Live Demo vs Videos**

Live demonstrations are not necessarily better than videos. There are both advantages and disadvantages to each.

##### **In person advantage**

- Students can ask questions during the demonstration.,
- Students get to see the demonstration live.

##### **Video advantage**

- Each students gets a good view - not just the ones nearest the instructor
- The entire process can be videoed without voice then a written script added at key parts.

- Editing also allows for some video to be sped up or slowed down to accent what is happening.
- A recorded video allows the instructor to better control the demonstration and be sure nothing was missed.
- Demonstrating a project that make hour or even days can be edited to show the entire process in a short video.
- Photo & graphics can be included in the video demonstration
- Students can replay video to watch again.

### **167. Socratic Teaching**

When you provide an answer to an asked question you provide what was requested but what about future questions? You can't expect to always be there to meet the needs of your students. If you include in your teachings how to find answers you teach how to solve problems as yet unexpected. A key part of your teaching should be showing where and how to find answers. How to research and discover the many alternative views and opinions. How to test and experiment to compare different techniques and processes. Teach self reliance.

### **168. Teach to Doubt**

Teach your students to question everything. Teach them to doubt. Teach them to explore the strange places and experiment with odd ways. Teach them that tradition is the enemy of innovation. Teach them to embrace change. Teach them that progress requires risk. Encourage them to dare to be different. At first it will confuse some and anger some – but many more will thank you for teaching them the really important things. The things that matter most.

### **169. Coach Approach**

The “coach approach” means applying the methods used by sport coaches to build confidence in increments. If you want to teach someone how to play hockey, start by building good skating skills. This approach works well for teaching sports but works equally for teaching anything. Start small and build towards big. Start by introducing something easy - something easy to master. When your student has mastered that first simple thing introduce something a little more difficult. Not a lot more difficult – just a little bit more. Continue introducing small increments moving to increasingly more difficult tasks. Each task mastered builds confidence in your student and encourages them to try something a little more difficult. That steadily increasing confidence works to create steadily increased competence. Start small.

### **170. Coach Approach Story**

Years ago I worked part time as a ski instructor – more for play than pay. The ski school director asked me if I could help out with one of the young Australian instructors some clients had made some negative comments about. I agreed to shadow him in a class teaching a middle aged couple to ski. It's important to note this young fellow was friendly, personable, and was an exceptional skier. Everything you can ask for as an instructor. I watched him demonstrate how to turn and steer down the hill then he asked the couple to copy what he did. It took only a minute for them both to fall. Several times he repeated the demonstration and asked them to try again – and again they fell down. it. I could see they were getting frustrated so I took him aside and suggested the problem might be speed control and maybe his students should first learn how to stop and slow down before learning how to steer. To his credit, he took it well and set out to give a great lesson on different ways to stop and different ways to control speed. By the end of the lesson he had both his students having a grand time sliding down the slope, talking about how much fun it was and how they now understood so many people loved skiing. I think that “start small” approach applies in teaching everything. If you're teaching glass art start by teaching how

to control pressure and speed to cut glass. If you're teaching pottery teach first how to wedge or slam clay and how to shape it with your hands. If you're teaching sandblasting demonstrate first how to control distance and angle. If you're teaching torchworking teach first how to control position in the flame. Start with small skills.

### 171. Problem Students

Fortunately problem students are relatively uncommon but the more you teach the more likely you will inevitably be forced to deal with some. Over the 50 or so years I've taught Entrepreneurial Management, Logistics, Skiing, Sailing, Glass Art and Pottery - and learned to deal with a variety of difficult students. A smart teacher will expect problem students and have a plan for how to deal with them.

- **Chatterbox** – talks constantly and treats the class as a social event.
- **Shy** – afraid to ask questions.,
- **Slow Poke** – works slow and takes longer than the others to finish.
- **Speed demon** – zips through the work ahead of everyone else.
- **Slow learner** – has trouble understanding what you're teaching.
- **Lacks confidence** – needs extra encouragement.
- **Time hog** – monopolizes class time.
- **Materials hog** – wants to consume as much material as possible.
- **Quantity over quality** – wants to make lots of projects without concern for quality.
- **Prodigy** – learns quick and wants to rush ahead.
- **Know it all** – thinks they already know everything you're teaching
- **Craft gadfly** – lacks focus and just flits like a butterfly from one craft to another.
- **Unsupplied** – didn't bring the requested tools and materials.
- **Underqualified** – a beginner that took an advanced level class.
- **Unrealistic** – came with unrealistic expectations.
- **Misinformed** – misunderstood what the class was about.

### 172. Dealing with Problem Students

Dealing with problem students is much like dealing with safety issues. You don't expect something to happen and hope nothing will happen but you know something could happen. You have a first aid kit in the event of an accident but you also have a plan for what to do if something does happen with problem students. Be prepared. Have contingency plans for dealing with different possible accidents and equally have plans for dealing with different problem students. Plan ahead. Be prepared. An important part of any planning and preparation should be considering how any problem will affect others in your class.

### 173. Materials Abuse

If you're supplying the materials for a class be careful what you make available. I've seen many examples where a student made a point of intentionally consuming as much material as possible. I remember once in a class overhearing one say, *"This class cost me \$300 so I want to be sure I make something with that much material."* I remember once a student in a glass class unwrapped a full \$400 sheet of dichroic glass to use as a base to tack fuse elements onto for a big glass bowl. I had a student in a pottery glass use almost \$100 worth of gold lustre to glaze a coffee mug. I've learned to keep my collection of expensive components (like dichroic glass and ceramic gold lustre) hidden away where students can't find them.

### 174. Student Story – Materials Abuse

In my glass fusing classes I control the size of the project each participant makes but leave them free to choose what glass to use. The group was in the glass storage room each selecting the



colours of glass to use in their projects. I overheard one woman comment how much she loved all the beautiful blue glass available because blue was her favourite colour. Another asked me, "Why does all the red and orange glass have higher price stickers than the other colours?" I told her different coloured glass had different prices depending on the cost of the materials used to make glass that colour. A minute later I noticed the woman that had raved about all the beautiful blue glass was exchanging her blue glass for red and orange glass. Even though she liked the blue better she decided to use the red because it was more expensive. I learned to stop letting students select from the same glass what was priced for sale and instead have separate glass in a different place for students to select from.

### **175. Student Story – Quantity over Quality**

One of the classes I offer is Fused Glass Xmas Ornaments. Each student is provided with a "student kit" that includes all the basic materials needed to make 12 ornaments (a mix of snowflakes, Xmas trees, snowman, gingerbread man and ball ornaments) with a big assortment of elements to put on to decorate. I have all the components premade so everyone could finish their 12 projects in the 90 minute class. It was common for many to not finish their projects in the 90 minutes and often the class run long. Imagine my surprise in one class after only 20 minutes one woman said, *"I've finished. Can I have another set?"* I told her it was intended to only make that many. She replied, *"I expected to make 40 or 50 to take to sell at a craft fair"*. I was tempted to let her make one more kit but had to consider if I allowed it I would expect others in the class to stop working on creating something quality and instead switch to hastily tossing together as many as possible. She was obviously unhappy but instead of leaving took the time to rebuild the ones originally done in haste.

### **176. Student Storey – unrealistic expectations**

In our Introduction to Torchworking class we teach the basics of working with glass in the flame of a torch. How to heat soften and shape glass, making beads and layering colours. Just before the class started one of the students approached me with a handful of photos and told me, *"These are the projects I want to make in the class"*. At first I thought she was teasing me but I was greatly confused when I realized she was serious. The photos were all advanced level art gallery quality projects. One was the cover of Flow Magazine. I scrambled mentally trying to find a diplomatic tactful way to explain her expectation was a delusion. I couldn't think of how so resorted to brutal truth and told her, *"You definitely won't be making anything vaguely like those projects. In fact, I think the best you can expect is to get some of your beads come out round."* I expected her to abandon doing torchworking but to her credit she continued, put serious effort into learning the basics and told me after how much she enjoyed the glass and planned to continue playing with glass and fire.

### **177. Student Story – Underqualified**

It's not uncommon for someone to take an intermediate level class expecting to avoid taking the beginner level. Often the instructor can work about it - but not always. One year at GlassCraft Expo in Las Vegas just as my class was starting my cell phone rang. It was son Jason that was teaching a glass in Stained Glass Repair. He told me he noticed a man and wife taking the class had all new tools and asked them if they had bought new tools just for the class. They told him they had never done glass before and expected he would also teach them how to cut and solder glass as part of the class. The Class Description specifically stated this was an advanced level class requiring intermediate to advanced glassworking skills. Jason asked what he should do. I told him it wasn't possible to teach the basic skills to this couple and still teach advanced level repair techniques to everyone else. I told Jason he had no option other than telling them they couldn't take the class.

### **178. Student Story – Misinformed**

I try to avoid misunderstandings by carefully wording class descriptions to clearly state what is and is not provided in the class. In a full day Introduction to Mold Making class the first line in the description specifically stated it did NOT cover mold making for lost wax casting. 20 minutes into the class one of the students asked, *"When will you be talking about molds for lost wax casting? That's what I took this class for."* Before I could consider a tactful diplomatic response my inside voice jumped out with, *"I won't be. If you had read the class description and not just the title you would know that".*

### **179. Student Story – Presumptuous**

In an Introduction to Coldworking class designed to teach a variety of techniques and equipment use with assorted machine set up for students I planned to start the class with some videos and demonstrations then let everyone try out the different machines. I was preparing to show the first of 12 videos when one of the students turned on one of the Wet Belt Sanders. I told her everyone would get a chance to try them out after the videos. She replied, *"I don't care about the videos or the other equipment. I know how to use these. I have a commission project to complete and don't want to buy an expensive machine just to finish it so I took this class to use the sander"*. Not even for a microsecond did I consider the possibility of a tactful or diplomatic response but responded, *"Nobody uses these machine until the videos and discussion is finished and nobody gets to monopolize a machine for personal use"*. I thought she would leave but she stayed through the glass. I let her stay late and helped her finish her project.

### **180. Instructor Presumptions**

Sometimes the responsibility for a problem remains with the instructor. The first class I taught in Weaving Glass at GlassCraft Las Vegas I presumed everyone would be able to cut strips of glass. I had plenty of glass with way more than I expected would be needed. Each student was to start by selecting their glass and cutting an assortment of 12 inch long strips of glass ½ inch, ¾ inch and 1 inch wide. I assumed even beginners could do that. ....WRONG.... So many were unable to cut straight strips of glass and wasted so much glass I had to step in to cut the strips for most and had to beg glass from other instructors to have enough for my class. My mistake. I now know to never make assumptions on what class participants can do but always plan for unexpected issues. I still teach Glass Weaving but now provide all the glass strips precut.

### **181. Student Speedsters**

Students that rocket through their project and finish way ahead of everyone else can be a disruption. You could have them wait and watch everyone else finish, you could just have them leave when their project is finished or you could have them do some extra project in the remaining time. That will fill in the extra time but it raises a concern it might be viewed as unfair to the other students that didn't get to make an extra project. Maybe your decision should be based on whether you think the student is uniquely skilled or just dashed through the project without concern for the quality of what was made

### **182. Time Filler Projects**

What can you do if a student has finished their project long before the allotted class time? Some of things I do that work well:

- GLASS. We have an assortment of precut squares or circles of clear glass along with assorted coloured components. Students can select components to place on a clear glass base to be fired in a kiln. It could be jewelry, suncatchers or whatever they want to try.
- POTTERY. An assortment of commercial plastic candy molds or molds we made from silicon, latex or ceramic bisque is available to fill with scrap clay to be fired to bisque. We

also have an assortment of stamps to press designs into clay that was rolled out to make cookies or small trays.

- SANDBLASTING (if you have a sandblasting cabinet). An assortment of precut vinyl stencils (cut with a Cricut) and precut pieces of glass (any kind) are available. Students can select a stencil, apply it to a piece of glass and weed out the part of the design to be etched. Each stencil can produce 2 projects by using both the positive and negative parts of the design.

### **183. Student Story - Sandblasting Popularity**

In our glass and pottery classes we let students make a few small sandblasting projects after finishing their class project. We do a lot of youth classes with schools, scouts, guides and birthday parties. Each student does their projects then spends any remaining time sandblasting. In one birthday party glass class, two of the boys that had been before in a class with their school group so knew what to expect. The glass project was to use assorted bits of coloured glass set onto a clear glass base to create a design to be kiln fired. Both these boys just scooped up a handful of components, spread it around the glass base and announced. *"I'm finished. Can I do sandblasting now?"* The popularity of sandblasting is why we always leave it to last. Once they start etching glass they have no interest in anything else.

### **184. Helicopter Parents**

One of the things that triggers my impatience is helicopter parents. We do both pottery and glass fusing classes for school groups, cubs, scouts, girl guides and birthday parties. The kids always have a load of fun making stuff from all the bins of glass components and using the many molds and stamps for clay. It's like building something from Lego. They build whatever they want and I fire it in the kiln to be picked up later. I like to just let them have fun and do whatever they want but sometimes when a parent with them will step in to "help" with the project. They probably mean to be helpful but in one group I realized their "help" was more harm than help. I had a group of about 20 kids 10 to 12 years old. After explaining the need to be careful and telling them where everything was they could use I let them launch into their projects. After about 15 minutes I noticed one boy hadn't started yet so I asked if he was having trouble deciding what to make. He answered, *"I need someone to show me the right way to do it"*. I froze when he said it. I told him, *"There is no right way to do it. You can do it however you want and make whatever you want"*. I asked him if he was in any sports or had any hobbies. He was a bit nervous at first about what he liked but mentioned he was interested in space and had built some model spaceships. I showed him the collection of different size and different colour glass pebbles and suggested some looked like planets – and how some of the bits of glass stringer and noodles could be cut up to look like little spaceships. He started slowly but soon launched into building an elaborate space scene with a space station, numerous shuttles and assorted planets in the background. Our shop has a new rule for parents that is explained to them in advance. You can make a project yourself or you can watch the kids work but you can NOT help. I wonder how many parents realize how harmful "helicoptering" is.

### **185. Tool Abuse**

Most students are careful with tool use but some are indifferent to how aggressively they use equipment they don't own. Even just a little impatience using equipment with diamonds can quickly generate enough heat to burn off the diamonds. I remember one time watching a student drilling glass set into water as coolant and seeing a blur of grey smoke in the water and realizing I had just said goodbye to all the diamonds on an expensive drill bit. I've several times seen a student break the diamond coated blade on a glass ring saw by pushing too hard when cutting. Many pairs of lead dykes have been ruined by someone using them as wire cutters. Overloading a pottery wheel and aggressively forcing clay to center can seriously strain the machine and

damage the drive system. Be careful what tools you let students use. Either don't let students use equipment they aren't experienced with or buy the extra heavy duty kind they can't damage.

### **186. Pilferage**

If you have a retail outlet some shoplifting is inevitable. Those losses are part of the cost of doing business like rent and utilities. Losing some supplies and tools in classes is also inevitable. Just as a shopkeeper must do what they can minimize losses, so must a teacher if they supply tools and materials. Only a small percentage of store customers shoplift and only a small percentage of students pilfer from you but that doesn't mean you shouldn't pay attention and make some effort to minimize your losses. It's a delicate dance between preventing losses and appearing accusatory. Over the years I've lost a lot of stuff to students. One thing that has helped a lot in both glass and pottery classes is having student kits set out with everything in plastic bins. Every student has a full set of everything. At the end of each class we clean up and prepare the kits for the next class. If anything is missing we can immediately see. Any tools or equipment that are set out for general use are placed in a tray where everyone can see them. Each instructor must make their own choice how much care is needed to minimize pilfering.

### **187. Problem Student Inevitability**

Problem students are inevitable. You should expect them and be prepared for them. They are a very small minority but not so insignificantly small you can pretend they aren't an issue. You have a responsibility to all your students to not let problem students interfere with their experience. It's like police enforcing speed limits. Not everyone speeds but that doesn't mean you should let some drivers ignore the laws. Make rules that are fair to everyone and enforce those rules universally to everyone.

### **188. Material Access Responsibility**

It is your responsibility to control what materials your students have access to. If you are teaching kilnforming glass and have any glass that is not compatible with that used in the class you can not expect your students to know they shouldn't use it. The same if you have material like dichroic glass you don't want students using. It is your responsibility to put it away where they can't unwittingly use it in a project. If you use different clay or glazes intended to be fired at different temperatures (low, medium or high) you can not expect your students to know they can't be mixed. It is your responsibility to ensure the only material they have access to is that safe to be used in their class project. The same if you have expensive material (like gold lustres) you don't want them to use and the same if you have tools or any other equipment you don't want students using. It is your responsibility to control what your students have access to.

### **189. Time Honesty**

Be honest about how much time a class should take and don't have students do busy work only to fill time. Structure each class to provide enough time to complete every class project and to cover all the instructional material but not stretched out just to consume more time. I taught glass art for over 20 years at GlassCraft Las Vegas where about 300 different classes were offered each year and noticed many 4 hour classes that could easily have been done in 2 hours and full day classes that could have been easily done in 3 or 4 hours. I saw classes where almost half the class was nothing more than the instructor showing examples of their personal work. I saw many where the instructor had the students doing work that should have been prepared before the class started. Designing your class time to be filled with material related to the class outline is more than good time management but equally about being honest in providing what students are paying for.

### **190. Project or Skill Development**

You can do one thing well or two things poorly. You can teach a technique or you can have your students make a fun project. With rare exception it's unrealistic to expect to do both in the same class. If you try to do both you dilute both and risk doing a poor job on each. Your class will be more effective if you choose one and focus on doing it well. If you want to teach both offer each in separate classes.

### **191. Teach First Sell Later**

Many instructors have products they sell and class students are always good prospects but it's important to keep teaching and selling separated. If you have things you want to sell, your sales pitch should not be part of your class. It should be either after the class or fully detached from the class. If you mix selling into instruction time it's no different than a timeshare sales pitch. Teaching and selling are two different things. Keep them separate.

### **192. Problem Student – Chatterbox**

A chatterbox that talks constantly and treats the class as a social event is not only disruptive to the teacher's class plan it spoils the experience for other students that took the class expecting an educational experience. Dealing with this particular kind of problem student is uniquely challenging for an instructor hoping to apply tact and diplomacy while maintaining class structure. I've never found a solution other than routinely interjecting with some comment to bring the conversation back to something related to the class. It works but I've never been really pleased with doing it. If anyone has an idea better than that I'd LOVE to hear it.

### **193. Be Gentle with Jargon**

Using trade technical terms can expedite communication but can as easily hamper it if your class participants aren't familiar with the terms. If your students are not familiar with the terms it will more often confuse communications. Too often using jargon becomes a shortcut too easy to slide into. When you use trade jargon you're assuming everyone knows what you mean. That assumption isn't always valid. When you say "ramp up" your students might not know it means "temperature increase". When a potter says, "fit" not everyone knows it means "compatible". If you think it's important to use trade technical terms you should be sure everyone know what they mean and maybe provide a handout explaining them.

### **194. Teaching Liability Issues**

If a student, or even just someone watching your class, has an accident in your class there's a chance (perhaps even a likelihood) they will sue you. You need to protect yourself.

- Liability insurance. Only fools don't have it.
- Liability release. You might want to have each student sign a release to protect against being sued if an accident happens.
- Explain risks and safety issues and give each student a safety handout. This is better legal protection than a liability release. They can't claim they weren't warned.
- Cancellation policy. It's a good practice to have a clearly stated policy for anyone that registers for a class then cancels.
- Class Description. It's especially important to provide an accurate outline of what your class covers – and equally important to point out what it does not cover. It's not uncommon for students to be unhappy because they expected the class to cover something it doesn't or for it to be at a level they weren't expecting. It should also list any tools or supplies each student is expected to bring with them.

### **195. Setting Class Fees**

There are many different things to consider when deciding what to charge for your classes. You could just copy what other instructors charge or take the time to figure out what your costs are and set class fees that apply to your needs.

- A high fee will discourage enrolment but a low fee makes it easier to sell out a full class.
- The longer the class the higher the fee should be. Charge for your time.
- Advanced level classes justify a higher price than a beginner class.
- If materials are included in the class you should charge for them.
- If your classes are intended more to create new customers than generate revenue you would benefit by offering lower class fees.

We each make our own choice on setting class fees. In my home studio I'm more interested in creating new customers than generating profits so set the fees to break even with materials cost plus a small fee for my time. For schools and youth groups I charge for materials and subsidize or donate my time. As a guest instructor in other studios I prequote a contracted fixed set price based on travel expense, accommodation and \$60/day for meals plus \$400 per day for my time. Each of us decides what we think is fair. For guest instructors in my studio I either pay a fixed fee or a split on the class revenue.

### **196. Advertising Your Class**

If you don't advertise how will people know about your classes? Tell the world what you have to offer. If you don't tell them, how will they know? Some ways to advertise your class:

- Posters, pamphlets or cards. Many places can provide high quality printing at reasonable prices. Hang posters in your shop and hand out pamphlets or cards to prospective students
- Internet social media – spread the word. The more places you post comments the more people will know you offer classes. Be prolific.
- Email newsletter. Create an email list of prospective students and send them a newsletter. Work at constantly expanding your list and use it to keep customers and students informed of what you're doing and anything new you have to offer.
- Snail mail. Create a mailing list (NOT email addresses) of prospective students and send them something to let them know you offer classes. Physical mail works and often better than email. Email is too easy to delete. We don't get much physical mail any more it's more likely to be read before deleting to the trash basket.
- Bulletin boards. Many community centres have public bulletin boards. Put up a small poster or pamphlet. Post ads on the different internet bulletin boards.
- Newspaper or magazine ads. These work but can be expensive and are usually relatively unproductive.

### **197. Class Evaluation & Feedback**

Print up and hand out something for your students to comment on your class.

- Did they get what they expected?
- Were they satisfied?
- What suggestions would they offer for improvement?
- What other class would they like to have you offer?

Class evaluations are as important to you as they are to your students. They give the participants a chance to comment but also give you valuable feedback on how you're doing, how you can improve and especially what else you might consider. When I taught at GlassCraft Vegas a few suggested a class in Coldworking Glass. I put together a class idea for a maximum class size of 12. It sold out the first day announced with a wait list of 50. It only stopped at 50 because show management stopped accepting more for the wait list. When in response to a request for a lecture

class on Selling Glass Art I was hoping to fill a class of 20. Got 150 enrolled and had to relocate to the big ballroom. You don't know what you're doing right or doing wrong if you don't ask – and you especially don't know what new thing to try until the idea is confirmed. The most popular class you do might be the one you haven't offered yet.

### **198. Encourage Questions**

Encourage your students to ask questions. Questions create progress. Questions encourage other questions. Questions expedite learning. I like to tell students. "We have all heard someone say there is no such thing as a stupid question. That's not true. Stupid is any question you wanted to ask but didn't ask because you were afraid to ask". Some students are nervous or shy and hesitant to ask questions. A good way to get them started is by asking them a question. Ask the class, "Was there ever a time you wanted to ask a question but didn't and afterwards wished you had?" To get class participants to start talking I like to start a class by asking everyone, "Please tell us who you are, where you're from and why you're taking this class. What do you hope to get from it?"

### **199. It Depends**

"It depends" is the almost universal first answer to every question. Everything has variables. The correct answer to every question depends on the variables.

- At what temperature should glass or clay be fired in the kiln? It depends on what you want it to do.
- What kind of glass or clay should I use? It depends on what you plan to do with it.
- What kind of kiln should I use? It depends on what you want to fire in it.
- What price should I ask to sell my work? It depends on where you're selling it.

No answer should be considered valid or correct until you have considered all the variable "It depends". Practice that presumption and teach it to your students. When you start with "It depends" you start applying logic to find effective solutions and stop looking for easy answers.

### **200. Reverse Engineering**

Visualizing building something from start to finish is great but analyzing how to build something backward is an even better way to fully understand a technique or process.

- How can that end result be reproduced?
- Are there different alternative to create it?
- What is the most efficient way?
- Does it need special equipment or can it be done without it?
- Can it be scaled up for production?
- Does it matter what order it's done it?

### **201. Teach the Science**

It isn't enough to teach what happens. You should also teach why it happens.

- Why does glass or clay crack if heated or cooled too fast?
- Why does clay shrink when it dries?
- Why does different glass and different clay respond differently in kiln firings?
- Why does glass and clay behave differently at different temperatures?
- Why must clay be wedged or slammed?
- Why does some glass follow scores more than others?
- Why does room temperature matter when cutting glass or working clay?

## **202. Become the Expert**

Your students expect you to be able to answer their questions. If you aren't expert at what you teach, put in the time to become an expert. If you can't provide answers to their questions be prepared to direct students to where they can find answers. That doesn't apply to just techniques and processes you teach. It should include alternatives and new developments. You have a responsibility to be as updated and as current as possible. Your students expect you to be the source for information they want. If you aren't prepared to make a serious effort to provide answers you might reconsider whether or not you should be teaching.

## **203. Teaching as Marketing**

There are benefits to teaching other than the direct income and the personal satisfaction from helping others. Teaching enhances your professional credibility as an artisan. Most of your customers (both retail and wholesale) will take you a lot more seriously if you are skilled enough and willing to teach how to make the things you sell. Some folks will trot out that old tired trite lame comment, "Those who can do and those that can't teach" but only fools and frauds take that comment seriously. That doesn't mean there aren't a lot of poor teachers involved only for income but they are the minority. Most artisans that teach treat it as a way to contribute to society. A way to pay to the future to thank those that helped them in the past. Most of your customers will see it that way and respect you for your willingness to share.

## **204. S.T.E.M. Partnership**

### **Science – Technology - Engineering - Math**

How does that connect with glass art and pottery? Teaching that connection and explaining it might be the most important and most significant contribution you can make for your students. It can be about just having fun making things but glass art and pottery can also demonstrate how it relates not just to S.T.E.M but how it also promotes logical analysis and problem solving. Your teachings can also include:

- **Chemistry** - The carbonates and oxides used to create colour in glass and pottery glazes are not dyes or colourants. They are chemicals that react with other compounds and respond to heat to create colours. To understand how those colours are created you must understand how different materials and different combinations of materials react to heat.
- **Physics** - To understand what causes good results and what causes failure you have to understand how the materials respond. What causes clay or glass to vitrify? What cause glass to devitrify? What cause glass or clay to crack?
- **Technology** - How electronic controllers ensure perfect results for kiln firings and how machines improve both efficiency and quality.
- **Engineering** - How to design a clay or glass project to be structurally stable, how to build molds to form clay or glass and how to design tools and jigs for working the clay or glass.
- **Math** – How to calculate kiln schedules to fire glass or clay in a kiln and how to calculate size to allow for expansion or shrinkage.

## **205. Problem Solving**

When you teach your students the many ways glass art and pottery requires solving problems you teach them how to find solutions for themselves and apply those problem solving skills to many other things in their life.

- How to prevent clay from cracking as it dries.
- How to prevent glass from cracking in the kiln
- What cause thermal shock?
- Why does clay have memory?
- Why does glaze fuse to clay?



- Why does glass break to follow a score?
- How do you deal with different COE in clay and glass?
- How do you deal with different viscosity?
- Why will glass or clay of different COE not fuse together
- How to prevent devitrification in glass.
- How to cause vitrification in clay.

## **206. Logical Analysis**

Teach your student how to apply logical analysis to find solutions and predict results.

- How do you create a desired result?
- How do you prevent clay or glass from cracking
- How do you remove clay memory?
- How does different kiln temperature produce different results for clay and glass?
- Why do different temperatures produce different results?
- What determines how fast is it safe to heat or cool clay to avoid it cracking?
- What happens if not fired hot enough?
- What happens if fired too hot?
- Why does clay crack if dried too fast?
- Why does glass crack if heated or cooled too fast

## **Safety**

### **207. Safety – Practice It - Preach It - Teach It.**

Safety first. You have a responsibility to keep your students safe. You also have a responsibility to teach them how to stay safe. I start every class discussing safety. Promoting safety builds trust with your students by proving you care about them. This doesn't just benefit the students but equally benefits you by providing liability protection against someone claiming they weren't warned. Some of the issues this would include are:

- Kiln installation
- Fumes
- Dust
- Ventilation
- Work Accidents
- Food Safe
- First Aid Preparations.
- Credibility

### **208. Safety Attitude**

The most important safety consideration is your attitude to the importance of safety precautions.

- How important is work safety to you?
- Are you prepared to make an effort to create a safe workplace?
- Will you enforce safe work practices – on yourself as well as others?
- Is work safety “When I remember” or “Always important”?

### **209. Prepare for Safety**

Be prepared and plan for safety - for yourself, for your students and for anyone that might visit your shop or classroom. Good safety practices require planning and preparation. Take time to

consider all the possible safety issues. What can happen? How can you prevent it? Make plans to deal with possible issues. Put together a first aid kit and learn some basic first aid. Instead of adopting the pessimist view “Accidents happen so nothing I can do about it” be the optimist with “I can prevent accidents from happening if I work at it”.

## **210. Safety Concerns**

Creating a safe workshop or classroom must consider more than accidents but must also consider:

- Fumes
- Dust
- Ventilation
- Work Accidents
- First Aid Preparations
- Hazardous Materials
- Waste Disposal
- Credibility

## **211. Fumes**

Both glass and ceramic artisans work routinely with materials that can produce poisonous or corrosive fumes. It's important to know what those materials are and how to provide protection.

GLASS –

- Boron nitride spray is both flammable and toxic. Never use it near open flame. Either use it outdoors or in a ventilation controlled spray booth and always wear a mask when spraying it.
- Fumes from burning kiln paper or fiber paper are irritating but more bothersome than toxic and last only for a short time during the kiln firing.
- Fumes generated from flux while soldering are both toxic and corrosive. Soldering should be done only when there is sufficient ventilation to avoid inhaling the fumes.

CERAMICS-

- Fumes from gases released from clay and glazes fired in a kiln are mildly toxic. Kilns should be vented to send fumes outdoors.
- Fumes from metallic lustres are especially toxic.

MSDS –

If you aren't sure, make a point of checking Materials Safety Data Sheets for all material you work with to see what precautions are needed. Don't guess. Make time to learn.

## **212. Safety Data Sheets**

Safety Data Sheets are something we all need but too few read. They allow us to understand what the product is, what materials are in the product, what risks there might be working with the product and how to avoid harm when working with it. Those data sheets will include:

- What the product is
- What the hazard is
- Ingredients
- First-aid measure
- Fire fighting measures
- Accidental release measures
- Handling & storage
- Exposure controls and personal protection
- Physical & chemical properties

- Stability & reactivity
- Toxicological information
- Ecological information
- Disposal considerations
- Transport information
- Regulatory information|

A fundamental part of any safe work practice is to accept responsibility to access and understand the data sheets of materials you work with.

### **213. Dust**

Some dusts are just a nuisance but others are seriously dangerous and can do permanent damage if inhaled. Of special concern is any dust created when sanding lead, glass dust or any materials containing asbestos or silica. Some things you should treat as essential for protection include:

- Respirators and masks. A proper respirator is best but at the very least you should have some of the disposable masks painters and drywallers use.
- Ventilation control. You should have some kind of ventilation to exhaust fumes and dust from our workspace.
- Suitable clothing. Dust will embed into fabric to be recirculated later for you to inhale later. It's a good practice when working with anything that creates dust to wear a plastic or rubber apron that can be easily rinsed off.
- Water. One of the most effective ways to prevent dust from being circulated is to keep dry material wet.

### **214. Ventilation**

It's important to have ventilation to exhaust any dust or fumes created while you work. You do not want high volume air flow with a high speed fan. High speed air flow will create an effect like a cyclone with dust and fumes swirling around with some coming back to you. Instead you want low volume air flow with a low speed fan creating a controlled balance between air going out and air coming in. Don't use a fan to push air. Use it to pull it. You want to draw air away. Restricting incoming replacement air is essential. Create a partial vacuum where the exhaust fan is removing air faster than it's coming into the work area with air being pulled into the work area and out through the exhaust. This creates a steady continuous flow with everything going out. Think of the difference between a fast flowing stream splashing over rocks compared to a stream with a steady flow drawing everything smoothly in the same direction. Slow and steady. An effective way to test if your ventilation air flow balance is working is to place a lit candle or incense stick where you work and watch to see where the smoke is going. Is it swirling around or is it being pulled in a smooth steady flow out the exhaust? Turning all the lights out and shining a flashlight will make it easy to see the smoke flow.

### **215. Fume Traps**

If it isn't possible for you to vent fumes out of your workspace there are a variety of fume traps that will draw in the fumes and filter out harmful materials – but do NOT assume all fume traps will provide adequate protection. Inexpensive ones will filter out dust particles but will not remove corrosive or toxic fumes. An easy way to check if a fume trap is removing dangerous fumes and not just particles is to place a piece of paper towel or tissue over the fume trap exhaust where air is being blown back into your workspace. If there is moisture or discolouring on the paper your fume trap is inadequate and should not be trusted.

## **216. Accidents**

Accidents might be inevitable but that doesn't mean you shouldn't take precautions to reduce the likelihood they happen, minimize the damage they can cause and be prepared for them.

- Handling glass. Glass edges are razor sharp and will slice through skin like a hot knife through butter. You can wear gloves when handling glass, use suction cups to carry it around or learn to "crab grab". In my glass art classes I teach everyone to take hold of a piece of glass with a thumb and finger forming a pincher like a crab or pliers. Grab hold of the glass without allowing the razor edges to press against you.
- Handling clay or bags of material. A 50 lb box of clay or bag of powder isn't an enormous weight but is more than enough to strain your back if not handled properly. Learn safe ways to lift heavy items.
- Eye protection. A flying shard of glass when cutting glass or a piece of pottery when sanding or grinding can do permanent damage. Be sure to have good eye protection – either glasses or a face shield. If you have need to look in a kiln while the elements are glowing you should wear tinted glasses.
- Corrosive materials. Both glass and ceramic artisans routinely work with corrosive materials. Take care to know which materials can do harm. Wear gloves and face protection where needed and be sure to have effective ventilation.
- Inattention. Not paying careful attention to what you're doing is probably the most common cause of accidents. Be aware of risks and take care to avoid them. Maybe the accident you should be most concerned about is the one you didn't expect might happen.

## **217. Safety Equipment**

- A critical part of safe work practice is having the protective tools and equipment you might need. It should include:
- Fire extinguishers - the kind appropriate to the materials you're working with.
- Fire alarms – highly visible and easy to access.
- Smoke detectors – preferable direct wired with battery backup.
- CO detectors – essential if you use anything with open flame.
- Propane detectors – essential if you have tanks or cylinders of propane.
- Safety glasses or face shields. For you and extras for guests or students.
- Ear protection – hearing damage is permanent.
- Respirator or dust mask - for you and disposable masks for guests or students.
- Rubber gloves – at least a box of disposable gloves.
- Work Gloves – for handling glass or for working with hot material.
- Rags – kept handy for quick cleanup when needed.
- Vacuum – preferably with a HEPA filter.

Not being able to afford the best available safety equipment is not an acceptable excuse for not having everything on that list. It's better to have something that is barely enough than to have nothing at all.

## **218. First Aid Kit**

Every shop should have a First Aid kit but you should consider it just a minimum and not necessarily everything that might be needed. Take a few minutes to consider what kind of work you and your students are doing and what might happen. This is the time to embrace the old adage, "Hope for the best but plan for the worst". Imagine what might happen that requires more than is needed in your First Aid kit. How likely is it to happen? How important is it to be prepared for even unlikely events? When you're wondering what to include in your First Aid kit remember that other old adage. "Better to have and not need than to need and not have".

### 219. Safety Plan

The best safety practice is to have contingency plans for what to do if something happens. Don't wait for an accident to happen than decide what to do. Plan in advance what you will do if something happens.

- Do you know where your safety equipment and First Aid kit is?
- Are they easy access in a hurry?
- Do you know how to use the equipment and first aid supplies?
- Do you know where the nearest clinic or hospital is?
- Do you have a plan for what to do if there is an accident?
- Have you considered all the possibilities?

Expect the unexpected. The accident you should be most concerned about is the one you least expected might happen.

### 220. Safety Training

You have safety equipment and a First Aid kit and a Safety Plan. That's a good start but it isn't enough. You need also to practice and train how to use them. Safety Training should be a key part of your work safe practice.

- Have you practiced what to do if something happens?
- Have you considered taking a First Aid course?
- Have you drafted a Safety Manual?
- Do you have a list of Safety Data Sheets for the materials you work with?

### 221. Safety Manual

One of the best investments in creating a safe work environment is taking time to write a shop Safety Manual. It provides a triple benefit.

1. It helps you consider what all should be included in your Safety Plan and Safety Training.
2. Having one available provides a guide for others working with you.
3. Having a Safety Manual encourages better work safe practices.

The time spend drafting a Safety Manual WILL make a significant contribution to preventing accident or injury. Invest wisely.

### 222. Shop Safety Signs

It's easy to get complacent about safety and forget how important it is to be always aware of what might happen and be always prepared. Signs on display in your work area remind and reinforce the importance of safe work practices. It could be simple generic signs like **SAFETY FIRST** or it could be something specific to what you do. Consider what you do and make signs that remind everyone of the risks.

- In our shop we work with lead. To remind how important it is to avoid lead poisoning from handling solder and lead came we have a shop sign . **WASH HANDS – before foil and after lead.**
- Because we work with sheets of glass we have signs for students and visitors **No open toe footwear allowed.**
- We also fire kilns for pottery where there is concern with venting fumes created in the firing. In the kiln room we have a sign. **KILN ON - VENT ON.**

Make your shop safety signs big bold and appropriate to what you do.

### 223. Hazardous Materials

Everything about work safety is important but especially important in your safety concerns are any hazardous materials you work with. Many of us work with some seriously dangerous stuff.

- Corrosive Chemicals. Do you know what they are? Do you know how to neutralize and how to dispose of them? Do you have Safety Data Sheets on everything you work with? Have you read them?
- Flammables. What precautions have you taken to prevent accidental ignition? Do you have plans for what to do if a fire starts? Do you have the right kind of fire extinguishers?
- Toxic Fumes and Dust. Do you have sufficient ventilation to prevent inhalation?
- Treatment. Have you planned what to do if you have an accident with hazardous materials.

#### **224. Waste Disposal**

Part of your safe work practices should be safe disposal of waste. Be considerate of others and be especially concerned about causing environment harm. Safe waste disposal is as much respect and concern for others as it is for your own safety. Pay special attention to what you flush down the drain and where you put hazardous materials. It's too easy to rinse things down the sink that should not be flushed into the sewage system and too easy to dispose of materials that should be treated or neutralized first.

- Acids and corrosive materials should be neutralized before disposal. Chalk (calcium carbonate) is cheap, widely available and works well to neutralize acids.
- Any material likely to clog drains should be packaged and treated as garbage. That includes anything greasy, clay (wet or dry) or any granular material like sand. If you work with materials that are likely to clog drains you should install special traps on any sinks you use.

#### **225. Food Safe Responsibility**

Food safe issues are your personal responsibility. If you produce something that is intended to be, or expected to be, used with food you are responsible to ensure it is food safe. It makes no difference whether it's something you sell or something you gift. You are responsible to ensure it is safe to use with food. You are responsible to know what materials you use and know how using them will affect whether not it is safe to use with food.

#### **226. Classroom Safety Responsibility**

Just as you are responsible for understanding possible issues with materials you use and whether or not what you make is safe to use with food, and ensuring your workplace is safe for you and any employees, you are equally responsible to ensure your classroom is safe for students that can not be expected to know what is or is not safe. Students are usually not safety conscious. Dangerous materials should be kept away where students can't access them. The same with any tools or equipment that are likely to cause accidents to anyone not experienced in how to safely use them. It is your personal responsibility to provide protection.

#### **227. Kiln Safety**

Whenever you work with any electrical appliances there is reason to be careful and especially important when working with electrical kilns that draw high voltage and produce high temperatures. Take the time to learn how to install kilns and how to use them.

- Location. Kilns should be at least 12 in (30 cm) away from anything combustible.
- Electrical. Learn what size wiring and what size breakers are needed for various size kilns.
- Maintenance and servicing. Learn how to safely service and repair your kilns.
- Loading & unloading. If what you do requires reaching inside a hot kiln be sure you have adequate protective gloves. If you look inside a kiln with the elements glowing you should have tinted eye protection.

- Venting. Both bisque and glaze firing produces fumes. A floor or hood vent is best but if you can't install a vent direct to the kiln be sure the room the room is adequately vented.

### **228 Credibility - Safety Silly**

The creditability of safety warnings is a lot more of an issue than many individuals appreciate. Overzealous warnings can lead to credibility issues. Maybe your greatest responsibility in creating safe work practices is to be completely honest and tell the truth. You have a responsibility to learn the truth and not just pass along misinformation even when it's well-meaning. When you pass along exaggerated or erroneous safety warnings you create distrust. If there is reason to distrust or disbelieve any of your safety warnings you should expect others to distrust or disbelieve all your safety warnings. Credibility and trust is your most valuable currency. Don't devalue trust with overzealous erroneous warnings. Learn the truth and tell the truth.

### **229. Safety Silly Examples**

Two examples of common well-meaning but exaggerated/erroneous safety warnings that create distrust.

- **You can get lead poisoning by handling lead.** The ONLY way to get lead poisoning is by ingesting it. Just wash your hands after handling it and don't eat it.
- **Kilns shouldn't have extension cords.** That's nonsense. The wiring from your service panel to the kiln wall outlet is an extension cord. The wiring coming to your house from the street is an extension cord. Construction sites have extension cords carrying at much as 200 amps. The only concern is whether or not the size of the wire is enough to safely carry the electrical load. You can run an extension cord from your kiln to Kenya if the wire is big enough.

There are many other examples of Safety Silly exaggerations that when learned to be incorrect lead to distrust. It is your responsibility to learn the truth and not pass along misinformation and exaggerations.

### **230. Safety & Liability Insurance**

You have liability insurance in the event someone has an accident. That insurance can be voided and leave you personally responsible if you fail to take reasonable safety precautions to provide a safe work place. Of special concern is insurance coverage if you have a kiln in your home or shop. Insurance companies that provide home insurance have become increasingly concerned about kilns installed in homes with many fully denying home insurance coverage if you have a kiln. If you allow the public into your workplace you SHOULD have liability insurance and SHOULD practice safe work practices to avoid being denied coverage if an accident happens. For homeowners and small businesses that were denied coverage because they had kilns I have done inspections and provided a certification that both the kiln and installation meets all needed standards that satisfied concerns expressed by insurance companies. If you have issues with your insurance provider try to find someone the insurance company will accept as qualified to certify and can do an inspection for you.

### **231. Safety Surprise**

There are lots of things you should do to ensure a safe workplace but maybe the most important practice is to "expect the unexpected". This is especially applicable if you experiment with different techniques. Some risks to watch for:

- Experimenting. Trying out new material mixtures you've never tried before or kiln firing materials you've never used before might produce unexpected risks.
- Allergies. Because you aren't allergic to something you use doesn't mean one of your students or visitors isn't.

- Accumulation. Some contaminants might be relatively harmless in small quantities but can build up in your body enough to become toxic.
- Stupidity. Never EVER underestimate human stupidity. Be always aware a student or shop visitor might do something stupid. You can't protect against all the things some fool might do but you should try to anticipate some of them.

An important part of every safety plan is to plan to "expect the unexpected".

## Attitude – the key to everything

### 232. Attitude Matters Most

Attitude determines results. Everything starts with attitude and everything ends with attitude. The attitude you bring to what you do determines how well you do it. A positive attitude produces positive results. A negative attitude produces negative results.

### 233. Optimism – Pessimism

Optimism and pessimism are each self-fulfilling prophecies creating expected results. A pessimist expects failure so when something is producing negative results it's what was expected so they allow it to continue. An optimist expects positive results so when something is producing negative results they see it as a mistake and step in to correct the mistake. Pessimists permit negative results. Optimists create positive results.

### 234. If Only

An entrepreneur doesn't let "if only" become an obstructive roadblock. They don't say, "If only I had more money" or "If only I had more equipment" or "If only I had more space". Instead, they say, "How can I?" "How can I do something with what I have now?" If you want to create a business or build a business or achieve anything in life, don't say "if only". Focus instead on "how can I".

### 235. It Depends

Most questions have multiple answers. The first answer is almost always "It depends". It can depend on many different variables. It can depend on what you do, it can depend on what others do or it can depend on something unexpected happening. It can depend on many things but most often it depends on you. What did you expect? What are you doing to make something happen? What are you doing to ensure desired results? What happens will depend most on your actions and your attitude

### 236. Amateur or Pro

There's nothing wrong with being an amateur any more than there's anything wrong with being a professional. Each has different goals and each works in different ways. Some of the best work is done by amateurs that make things as a hobby. They enjoy the luxury of time and use it to good advantage. Amateurs don't care how long it takes to complete a project, but take pleasure in doing it. They have no reason to rush and can take however long is needed. The result is often work superior to that done by professionals. The pro expects to be paid for their time, so learn to work quickly. It's the speed at which they work that determines how well they are paid. They know that there is a limit to what a customer is willing to pay. If they demand too high a price, the customer will refuse to buy it. If they take too long to produce that work, they'll be poorly paid for their time. It's not that either the amateur or professional is superior to the other, but that each has a different goal. The amateur might often produce better work, but takes so long it would be impossible to make a living doing it. The professional tries to produce work to a set standard and work quickly



enough to produce it at a price customers are willing to pay. The greatest difference between amateurs and professionals is not in the quality of their work, but in how long it takes to produce it.

### **237. Pleasure or Pay**

A hobbyist becomes a professional when they stop expecting people to buy what they like to make and choose instead to make what people ask to buy. The key difference between a hobbyist and a professional is being paid. If you do it for the pleasure of the activity it's a hobby. If you do it for pay it's a profession. Often the lines get blurred. A hobbyist can sell a few things and be a part-time professional and a professional can do work just for the pleasure of doing it – BUT – the difference between hobbyist and a professional artisan remains firm. It's about being paid. The definition of "professional" is clear. ***"Someone engaged in a specified activity as one's main paid occupation rather than as a pastime"***.

### **238. Hobby to Business Transition**

Many artisans find it difficult to move from doing something as a pleasurable pastime to turning it into an income generating enterprise. Some adapt easily and some only partially. A few even find it impossible to adapt. Where a hobbyist does it for the pleasure of the activity a professional is often forced to focus on working for pay to make things they don't much like making. Some, but rare few, are able to partner both and do some work for pleasure and some for pay.. Many can't because it's common for the fun to be gone when the play becomes work. There are two significant changes a hobbyist makes to transition to working for income.

- Instead of asking people to buy what you like to make the focus changes to what people want to buy.
- Where a hobbyist is concerned about materials cost with little concern for how long it takes to make something, income from sales depends heavily on time investment so must reverse that to focus more on time spent than materials cost.
- Where a hobbyist prefers to experiment always making different things it becomes necessary to develop work efficiencies to reduce time investment.

Some individuals can adapt to those changes but some either can't or won't. A few can find ways to keep both by alternating between doing some for play and some for pay. Whatever each individual decides, their income will depend heavily on what customers want to buy and the time required to make what they sell.

### **239. Love your Talent**

Everyone has a talent. We just don't all have the same talent and many of us don't have the talent we want. Some have talent in art, some in music, some in science and some have a gift for getting along with and influencing others. We all have talents. Talent doesn't always mean you're especially good at something. Being good at something more often comes from practice. You don't need talent to acquire skills. You need practice. Talent more often it means something that is easy for you to learn. Many very talented individuals are incredibly lazy. They are so accustomed to things being easy for them they avoid anything that isn't easy for them. That lack of persistence is often the biggest reason many very talented people fail. Not everyone is pleased with the talent they have but wish for a different talent. The happiest individuals are those that like the talent they have. The unhappiest are those that want a talent they don't have. If you want to be happy don't worry about any talents you don't have. Love the talents you have, learn to use them effectively and learn to compensate for the talents you don't have.

#### **240. Best Investment**

Buying good tools to improve work efficiency is always a good investment but maybe the best possible investment is spending time to build personal skills. Each new technique you learn and each new skill you acquire is like adding another special tool to your tool box. No single tool works for every job, and no single skill is right for every application. The more skills you have, the more likely it is you'll have the one that works best for whatever it is you want to do. Invest the time to collect as many skills as you can. Learn everything you can so you'll always have the right tool ready when you need it. Build a big tool box from a collection of skills.

#### **241. DIM it.**

Whenever I want a new tool I first look to DIM. "Do It Myself."

If you need or want a specialized tool instead of looking where to buy, learn to make it. Not only is making your own tools a good financial investment it's a terrific investment in skill building. Learn how to make special tools. Learn how to make jigs. Instead of buying gadgets learn how to make them. If you learn how to DIM stuff you will never waste time looking where to buy something. You might also be pleasantly surprised to find some of the DIM stuff you created can be made and sold to others that didn't learn how. A big part of my family business is selling tools and equipment that started as DIM stuff for my own use.

#### **242. The Best Way to Learn**

There is no one best way to learn. Each of us is unique and learns in uniquely different ways. Some of us learn by personal experiments, while others prefer to watch others demonstrate it. You might prefer a personal structured lesson, while others do better working at their own pace with books or videos. Many have found the internet to be a great learning source while others insist on learning by doing. Probably the best way to learn is by trying all of the alternatives before deciding which is best for you.

#### **243. The Best Technique**

A method or technique that works well for you might not work so well for someone else. Something that is perfect for one application might be useless for another. Each of us has from our own practice and experimentation discovered the ones we are most comfortable using and when different alternative methods are most effective. It's foolish to reject anything you've never tried. Sometimes the least expected method will surprise you and end up becoming your favorite, or it may turn out to be the only thing that works right for that very special thing you're trying. In the end, the best method for you is the one that you best like using.

#### **244. Stupid Questions**

We have all heard someone say, "*There is no such thing as a stupid question*". I disagree with that. I think any question you wanted to ask, but for some reason you were hesitant or afraid to ask, qualifies as a stupid question. Maybe the only really stupid questions are the ones you didn't ask. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be too proud to ask for help – and don't hesitate to answer questions – even when you think the question is stupid.

#### **246. What Kind of Experience**

There are two distinctly different kinds of experience. There's the kind where you are constantly learning new things at every opportunity, and using those new things to add to all your previous experience and knowledge - then there's the kind where you learn a few things in your first few years and keep on repeating them. What kind of experience do you have? Did you learn just the basics and keep repeating them without trying new things and learning some new techniques, or have you been constantly improving? Do you have ten years of the same experience, or is it

one year you've repeated ten times? Are you saying, *"I do it this way because I've always done it this way."* or is it, *"Of all the ways I've tried, I like this way best"*.

#### **246. Don't be a Luddite**

Luddites were 19<sup>th</sup> Century English textile workers that rallied to oppose the introduction of automated machinery. Opposition to mechanization didn't stop with textile workers. There have always been, and likely always will be, opposition anything that reduces the need for human labour. There was opposition to removing jobs like telephone or elevator operator, type setters, book binders, etc. Carpenters opposed using power saws to replace hand saws. Office workers opposed photocopiers and electronic calculators. The list is long and continues. Technology has always put some people out of work and will assuredly continue to do so. Artisans now use computers, 3D printers, lasers, robots and artificial intelligence programs. You can choose to accept and use such things as tools or you can indulge the same futile exercise as the luddites insisting textiles should continue to be woven by hand. For all those folks, and there are many, that complain how wrong it is to replace people with new technology, my response is, *"If Leonardo Da Vinci was alive today he wouldn't be dicking about with a hammer and chisel. Not only would he be using computer directed laser cutters, waterjets and 3D printers, he'd be writing computer programs to operate them"*. Stop complaining and learn to use the best tools available to you.

#### **247. Grow Good Habits**

It's easy to pick up some bad habits and often hard to break them. Maybe the best way to break or avoid bad habits is to put some effort into creating good habits. Good habits create good projects. The more good habits you have, the more good projects you will produce. The opposite applies for poor habits. Poor habits need to be weeded out. If you make good habits a routine part of your work, you will routinely have successful projects. If you allow poor habits to become part of your work, you will routinely have failed projects. Some examples of good habits worth adopting.

- Always review a programmed firing schedule before walking away from the kiln.
- Be patient with kiln wash - more thin coats is always better than fewer thick coats.
- Keep a kiln log recording firing results.
- Clean up after you finish – not before you start.
- Keep a firm maintenance schedule for all equipment.
- Make safety first – not as an afterthought.
- Do the hardest jobs first.
- Practice the 3 min rule. Any job that can be finished in less than 3 minutes is to be done immediately.
- Keep notes. Remembering to write it down is the best memory trick.

Weed out your bad habits and grow a garden of good habits. At first it might seem like a lot of extra work but I guarantee you will be pleased with the projects you harvest from your efforts.

#### **248. Good Enough**

Sometimes good enough is good enough. To generate income a professional artisan must worry about how long it takes to produce something so must have a clearly defined goal as to what level of quality is required. It doesn't need to be perfect, but only to be done to an acceptable professional standard. Someone doing work as a hobby will often chase an elusive goal of perfection. The problem with trying for perfection, is that it's an unreachable goal. No matter how good it was done, it could have been better. Perfectionism can easily become a compulsive obsession. When you make something, you might ask yourself, *"Who am I trying to please?"* If it's for yourself, you'll probably never be fully satisfied with the quality and be forever unable to

overlook it's imperfections. Most of us have the same problem that whenever we look at our work, we see only the flaws and the "could have done better". If you make something as a gift for a friend or for sale, the standard is different. It should be their opinion, and not yours, that determines acceptability. If they're satisfied with it, it is good enough. If someone is willing to pay to purchase your work it is good enough.

#### 249. Keep Your Crap

Keep your crap pieces. Whenever something we made fails to meet our expectations our first thought is to trash it and never ever see it again. Even if it is just a relatively small imperfection we can't stop looking first at that imperfection. We're drawn to it and see only that flaw – that mistake. How dare that flawed folly share space with other work we are proud of. You should resist the urge to toss it out. Learn to value it and appreciate it deserves a special place in your collection. Whenever a hint of negativity seeps into your thinking, take out those failures. Look at them and see how much progress you've made. See those failures as seeds of success. I have a huge collection I call the "buggered box". Whenever I see a student look a bit disappointed with one of their projects I take out that box and tell them, *"If you think that's bad, let me show you REALLY screwed up stuff"*. Keep your crap pieces. One day you'll be glad you did.

#### 250. When to stop.

One of the most important decisions in any project is knowing when to stop. It's too easy and too common to want to add "just a little bit more" and ruin a project by going one step too far. In my "buggered box" collection of failures many of those failures came from going one step too far or adding one thing too much. Before taking that extra step and adding that one more thing ask yourself:

- Will it add to it?
- Is it already good enough?
- Is it time to stop?
- Is complexity superior to simplicity?

#### 251. Failure is Inevitable

The only absolute certainty is you will experience some failures. Accept them. Don't let failure stop you or even slow you. Embrace your mistakes. Making mistakes is one of the best ways to learn – even if all you learn is things to stop doing. Understanding what won't work is as important as knowing what will work. Push forward and keep making mistakes. Keep making mistakes until they stop being mistakes and become successes. Persist through your failures. Persistence is a positive character trait.

#### 252. The Goldilocks Principle

In the story when Goldilocks sampled the porridge of the 3 bears, the first taste was too hot, the second was too cold, and then finally on the third sample it was just right. I practice that expectation in every new thing I try. The first effort will be too much, the second effort will be too little, then finally my third effort will be just right. Don't rush it. Getting it right on your third try is about as good as it gets. Consider the Universal Rule of Failure Probability: ***The probability of a project failing is in direct proportion to the value of the materials used and the importance of meeting a deadline.*** If you're trying something never before attempted, don't use expensive materials and don't expect success. If you have a deadline, start early and don't wait until the last minute. Allow time for the first two failures.

### 253. My Favourite Sales Class Question

I've been teaching Entrepreneurship for almost 50 years and still give classes in Selling Your Work to artisans. In my classes there is one question I always expect someone to ask. *"If the plan is to make things that sell how do you know what will sell?"* My answer, *"I've been making and selling things for more than 40 years and with practice and experience got pretty good at guessing what will sell. So good, I'm now only getting it wrong 9 times out of ten"*. Did I mention that mistakes are inevitable?

### 254. Change Resistance

Failure is inevitable. So is change. Trying to resist change is as futile as trying to push away a hurricane by waving a fan. Not only should you accept change, you should embrace it. Expect it. Be prepared for it. Plan to pivot. Make plans for ways to deal with change. Where there is change there is opportunity. Be ready to take advantage of those opportunities when change comes.

### 255. Risk Aversion

It's always smart to avoid risks but taking risk aversion to extremes can be as harmful as ignoring risk. Sometimes taking a risk can produce benefits. Do what you can to minimize damage from risk but if you never take a risk you never make gains. You should take risks but take the time to be sure they are smart risks providing real benefits. I lost it sometime ago but I used to have a poster in my office that said, *"Beyond the tortoise. He makes progress by sticking his neck out"*. Many individuals don't understand the true meaning of "entrepreneur". Webster dictionary defines it as ***"a person who starts a business and is willing to risk loss in order to make money"***. The key word here is RISK.

### 256. Comfort Zone

Because you are good at something doesn't mean you shouldn't try to get better at it. Because something has worked well for you in the past is not a reason to assume it will work well for you in the future. There is no neutral position. Change is inevitable. If you refuse to step out of your comfort zone you will be left behind while others move ahead. If you aren't moving forward you are falling behind. Take risks. Plan them carefully and do what you can to be sure they are smart risks but step out of your comfort zone and move forward. Try new techniques. Experiment with new ideas. Embrace change and plan for progress. **The only time you get to coast is when you're going downhill.**

### 257. Risk Tolerance

How much risk is acceptable? How much can you tolerate? How much loss will you accept? Each of us has a different level of tolerance depending how much loss we can accept and how much we fear risk. Each of us must make our own choice. What someone else accepts might not be acceptable to you. There is no formula that works for everyone. Each of us makes our own Risk Benefit Analysis and decides if the possible benefit is worth the definite risk. Where some might be willing to go "all in" and bet everything, others might prefer hold something in reserve. The more risk you are willing to take the more you stand to gain. I suggest you should be willing to take risks but avoid risking more than you can afford to lose and always manage risk to minimize potential harm.

### 258. Adapt or Die

As artisans, one of our biggest problems building a market for our work is low priced (but respectable quality) imports have created the perception that glass art and pottery should be relatively inexpensive. There is no such thing as real value. There is only perceived value. If the public perception is that glass art or pottery is available at low prices (and much of the imported

work is cheap) then our customers won't be willing to pay the prices we expect to charge. Artisans here that keep claiming imports are inferior quality are deluded. Much of it is exceptional. They are equally deluded if they think their customers will pay significantly higher prices for locally made. Change is inevitable. You can fight it or you can accept it and adapt to it. You can keep doing what you have always been doing or you can adopt new ideas and new techniques and new ways to produce what you make. If you fight change you will lose. Adapt or die. Probably the most effective way to adapt is with constant improvement and innovation.

### **259. Innovation Trumps Fabrication**

Who deserves artistic credit? Is it the designer or the fabricator? Is the architect more important than the builder? Is the composer more important than the performer? Which deserves greater credit and greater respect? Each individual might answer that question differently but the marketplace has been consistently clear in offering greater respect, greater support and greater reward for the presumption innovation trumps fabrication. Innovative design is more valuable than fabrication skills. You should always put effort into improving personal skills but if you hope to sell your work you should put much more effort into innovating new techniques and creating new designs.

### **260. Repetition Rejection**

When I hear an artisan insist, *"I don't do production work"* I ask them, *"Why? Do you think doing repetitive work is somehow demeaning? Why would you reject one of the most effective ways to build skills?"*. Repetition polishes and perfects skills. Beginner glass artisans are taught to practice cutting glass until posture, pressure and speed become automatic. Potters are taught to make 50 identical coffee mugs same size same, shape and uniform thickness.. Even the best singers and musicians do practice routines to polish their skills. Practicing repetition is the BEST way to build personal skills. One of my favourite ways to relax is cut up pieces of glass to make components for classes. I love the routine of making slip cast molds or pour casting glass. Where some reject repetitive work as boring, others find it relaxing. Whether you love or hate repetitive work doing it does build skills.

### **261. Zen Repetition**

Doing repetitive work isn't just a terrific way to refine skills it can also be very relaxing - even therapeutic. Many potters claim working on a wheel induces a relaxed feeling much like meditating. Glass artisans cutting up repetitive shapes in glass, leading a large panel or running long beads of solder often comment how relaxing it is. One of my customers is a surgeon that told me his favourite way to unwind after a difficult surgery is to work with clay on a wheel. I've talked with art therapists that suggest doctors should be allowed to write prescriptions for stained glass or pottery classes for patients suffering from stress disorders.

### **262. Art Economic Exceptionalism**

Contrary to the claims and presumptions often voiced, art isn't special. If you hope to sell your work you should abandon any presumption art is something so special it is exempt from the economic principles that apply to everything else. Everything sold is either a product or a service. Art is not a third option. It makes no difference if you're selling appliances, automobiles or art. Each will be governed by market demand and value perception. There are ways to alter demand and ways to change value perception but there are no ways to make art exempt from the same laws of supply/demand equilibrium that apply to everything. Increasing supply without increasing demand will reduce prices. Increasing demand without increasing supply will increase prices. This applies to everything. Art is not an exception. Market it like any other product.

### 263. Market Share

There are two significantly different theories on what affects market share.

- **The Pie Theory** presumes the market is a fixed size like a pie so whenever anyone new joins the market they take a piece of the pie. The share they take means there is a smaller piece for everyone to share. Believing the Pie Theory generates fear and protectionism.
- The **Dam Theory** presumes the market is like a lake created by a dam. When someone new joins the market they help elevate the dam. That allows the dam to hold more water which raises the water level of the lake. This is what pretty all economists believe and is the source of the famous quote from JFK "A rising tide floats all boats". By expanding the market everyone gets a bigger share. The market expands in all dimensions like a balloon inflating. Anything that restricts the market does the opposite. Protectionism shrinks the market. Cooperation expands it.

How effectively you market your work will depend DIRECTLY on which theory you adopt. Do you choose to be combative and protectionist or prefer inclusive and cooperative? Are you a lone wolf or a team player?

### 264. When Does Craft Become Art?

That question often evokes strong feelings with some individuals becoming aggressively enraged at any suggestion their work isn't art but it is a valid question that should be asked and discussed. When does craft become art? I believe the change happens when it's more about being admired than being used. Maybe a much better question would be "When does art become craft?" I think that happens when the maker is more concerned about how it's used than how it looks.

### 265. Leash Your Ego

Ego can be both constructive and destructive. It can be a propellor pulling you forward or it can be an anchor holding you back. It can motivate you to work harder and try new things but if not controlled and regulated can encourage you to make foolish decisions. There's no reason to keep your ego in a cage but because it can as destructive as constructive it should be kept on a tight leash and carefully managed. When you make a decision be careful that it's you in control and not your ego. Your ego is a tool. Use it wisely. Keep it in storage and bring it out only when needed.

### 266. Criticism

You will probably be criticized more than praised. A lot more. Learn to stay detached from what others say. If you're trying to sell your work the ONLY opinion that has ANY relevance is that coming from someone willing to buy it. What anybody else thinks or says should be ignored. Let the marketplace decide if its good or bad. I've always liked the quip, "A critic is someone that owns a road map but doesn't know how to drive the car".

### 267. Stupid questions

Anyone that has been dealing with the public has experienced a few questions they probably feel were stupid. For years I was a craft gypsy travelling from show to show selling my work. I regularly threatened to post a sign with the 10 stupidest questions I had been asked at shows. I suppose everyone has their own list but here's my top 10 that I've actually been asked:

1. Will it break?
2. Is it fired in a stove or does it need a special kiln?
3. Is the colour applied with a brush or sprayed on.
4. Is a special paint used for the colour?
5. Will the colour fade in the sun?
6. Why is the selling price so much higher than the material cost?

7. Does it take long to learn how to do this?
8. Can people make a living doing this?
9. Why would someone buy this?
10. Where did you buy this from?

## 268. Responding to Stupid Questions

Whether it's teaching a class or out selling your work it's inevitable you will be asked questions you think are stupid and even some you consider insulting. You can't prevent such questions but you can, and should, have a plan in advance for how to deal with them. Some options:

- Ignore them. Just pretend you didn't hear.
- Respond with anger or sarcasm. It might feel good but achieves nothing positive.
- Provide a straight answer. The adult rational response.
- Respond with humour. Why not have fun? Most customers will appreciate the humour.

## 269. My favourite Answers

My favourite answers to "special" questions.

1. Will it break? - *Only if you drop it.*
2. Is it fired in a stove or does it need a special kiln? - *Glass and ceramics are fired in special kilns to produce much higher temperatures than stoves.*
3. Is the colour applied with a brush or sprayed on? - *Ceramic glaze is added onto clay but glass colours are created by melting minerals or oxides with sand to create coloured glass.*
4. Is a special paint used for the colour? - *(same answer as item 3)*
5. Will the colour fade in the sun? - *Maybe in a few million years.*
6. Why is the selling price so much higher than the material cost? - *I charge extra for selecting nice colours.*
7. Does it take long to make this? - *This one or the first one I made?*
8. Can people make a living doing this? - *Some can. I just do it to avoid having an honest job.*
9. Why would someone buy this? - *Usually because they like it.*
10. Where did you buy this from? - *The guy that made it. Me.*

## 270. Professional Image

It's always a good practice to look professional and ESPECIALLY important for artisans trying to sell their work.. Whether it's fair or reasonable or not is irrelevant but artists and crafters have a reputation for being irresponsible and unreliable. Old joke, "*If they promise to deliver it next Monday be sure you agree which month*". One gallery owner I worked with me commented, "*I love selling handmade work but gawd I hate dealing with the people that make it*". People that deal routinely with artisans have learned to assume many are pretty unreliable and irresponsible. That perception means you need to make special effort to change that opinion and do what you can to appear professional and likely to keep your promises.

- Keep promises. If you aren't absolutely certain you can keep a promise, don't make it a promise. Make it an "I'll try".
- A key part of that "appear professional" is to dress appropriately, have a professional looking website and professional business cards. Look professional. Don't show up at a high end art gallery dressed like you just finished shoveling out the cow barn.



## Attitude Matters

### 271. Unprofessional Behaviour

I was a craft show gypsy for years and exhibited for both retail and wholesale sale at over 100 venues including renting space in shopping malls and witnessed some severely unprofessional and irresponsible behaviour from artisans.

- At a show just before Xmas at an elegant and expensive mall a couple in the booth next to me had set up a kerosene camp stove to cook lunch. What a surprise when mall management came and asked them to pack up and leave.
- Often at various venues some sellers were so late they didn't start setting up their booths until after the show started.
- At a show that ended at 5 pm exhibitors were specifically told to have everything cleared out by 8 pm. As I was moving out the last of our exhibit just after 7 a couple showed up to start clearing out and said they have decided to go out for dinner before packing up.
- At a glass art show in Las Vegas where exhibitors were specifically told they could not display drug paraphernalia about a half hour after the show opened one exhibitor put out a tray of pipes and bongs. Within 5 minutes a pair of football linebacker size security guards walked in, picked up his table, and without saying anything walked it out into the hall.

### 272. Own Your Mistakes

You will make mistakes. Probably a lot. It's not a question of whether or not you will make mistakes but just how many, how often, and how bad they are. Making mistakes is inevitable. Accept it. When you make a mistake it's important to own it. We all make mistakes. People will forgive you for making mistakes but only if you own the mistake and accept responsibility for it. Never EVER try to shift the blame to someone or something else. Own it. Accept responsibility. Apologize for it and promise to do everything you can to correct it. Learn from it. Whether it's an individual or a company, the quality of perceived character and performance isn't measured by whether or not you make mistakes but by what you do when you make them. Own your mistakes.

### 273. Strengths & Weakness

Each of us has some of each. We might have a few small ones while others have many big ones but each of us has some strengths and some weakness. You might be good at sports but poor at creativity. You might be good at art but poor at interpersonal relations. You should try to understand where you have strengths and where you have weakness. We each can try to improve our strengths and reduce our weaknesses but inevitably must all accept we aren't good at everything. We have to accept that reality but that acceptance doesn't mean we can't manage our strengths and weaknesses. We can learn to identify what we're good at and what we need help with. We can learn how to take advantage of our strengths and how to shield our weaknesses.

### 274. Ask For Help

You can't do everything and you won't be good at everything. Sometimes the best way to deal with our weaknesses and shortcomings is to ask for help. Asking for help isn't an admission of failure but is instead a kind of strength. It's being strong enough and smart enough to recognize and accept something we aren't especially good at and seeing a way to compensate for it by asking for help. If you need help don't be ashamed or afraid to ask for it. Reach out. There are others out there willing and able to provide that help. Just ask.

### **275. Offer Help**

Our society has too many takers and not enough givers. We have too many concerned only with how something will benefit them personally and not enough ready to offer help to others. This is disturbingly common in many arts groups and guilds with too many joining only for how others can help them and too few joining to help others. Cooperatives and guilds are supposed to be a cooperative team effort with everyone working together for mutual benefit. If you expect to get something out of membership you should be ready to give something to help other members. Be a giver. We need more. There are already too many takers.

### **276. You Can't Monetize Everything**

Much of our society has become focused on monetizing everything with an expectation everything we do should produce income. You can adopt that presumption everything is about making money or you can reject it and adopt other motivations. Instead of asking, *"How can I make money from this?"* you might ask, *"How can I be helpful? How can I contribute to making my world a little bit better?"*

### **277. Love Your Talents**

We all have talents but we don't all have the same talents. For some of us it's art, for some it's music, for some it's business and for others it's an empathic ability to relate to others. We all have talents. Some of us like the talents we have while others wish for talents we don't have. The happiest individuals are the ones that like the talents they have. The unhappiest are those that wish for talents they don't have. You are most likely to be happy and successful if you learn to love the talents you have and use them effectively.

### **278. Is it Talent or Skill?**

It's important to understand the difference. Talent is something inherited. A gift. Skill is something earned. Having talent in something makes it easier to do. Skill is an ability acquired by persisting to master something that isn't easy. It's common for individuals with talent to avoid things that are difficult and focus instead on the things their talent makes easy. Talent isn't rare. It's a lot more common than persistence. That's why so many highly successful individuals are not especially talented but built their success by relying instead on hard work.

### **279. Working Cheap**

Lots of people will tell you, "Don't work cheap". I'll tell you the opposite. Start by working cheap. For many artisans, working cheap is the best way to get started. Beginners work cheap. Apprentices work for half wage. Interns work free. Nobody ever launched a business by asking a high price and consistently reducing the price until it sells. Instead, start at the lowest price you can tolerate. If others complain you are being unfair offering low prices, ignore them. If it's your work it's your price. You decide what to make and you decide what to sell it for. If you start by asking high prices all you will do is build a collection of your own work. If you start by selling at low prices you will sell what you make and steadily move on to selling more work at increasingly higher prices. Start by working cheap. It's smart business and you shouldn't care what others charge.

### **280. Pushing the Car**

Starting a business is much like pushing a car. The hardest part is to get it to start moving. The objective is to make it move forward. To create momentum. Whether it's pushing a car or starting a business don't worry about steering it. Focus instead on getting it to start moving forward. Don't worry about steering the car or the business. Just get it moving and worry about steering it later. Generate sales. Generate revenue. Generate momentum.

### **281. Business Plans**

The presumed need for a Business Plan is more about attitude than application. Is it needed? Too many individuals insist it's important – even essential when starting a business. I think that's nonsense. When you start a business you don't know what will work so you experiment. You try new ideas and new ways to make things and new ways to market your work. You innovate. You invent. Suggesting you start a business with a business plan is like being told to find a new path through the mountains but start by drawing a map for that new path. That's silly. You draw the map after you explore and find a path. It's the same when you start a business. A business plan will help you better navigate a path but won't help you find one. I've created, assisted and consulted for many businesses. Over the years I learned to apply an "Entrepreneur's Business Plan"

- Travel Light – take only essentials.
- Feed Whenever Possible - use every income opportunity.
- Hunt Constantly - promote, promote, promote.

### **282. When is it Ready for Sale?**

When is your work good enough to sell? This question is an issue for many hobbyists wondering if they can sell their work. It's a good question with a simple answer. It's ready for sale when someone is willing to buy it. Many artisans hesitate offering their work for sale because they fear it isn't good enough. Maybe they're afraid of rejection? Maybe afraid of failure? There are lots of negative maybes. All of them unimportant. All to be ignored. There are also lots of positive maybes. Maybe people will love it. Maybe people will buy it. Maybe you'll discover selling your work is personally gratifying. Don't worry about the negative maybes. Focus instead on the positives. Take a chance. Put it up for sale. It's ready for sale when you decide it is.

### **283. Doing Repairs**

Some artisans have a positive attitude to doing repairs and others purely negative. Some like doing repairs but some hate doing them. Whether you like them or hate them it's important to accept not everything can be repaired and not everything is worth the effort to try repairs. Some individuals enjoy being able to salvage something while others view repairs as confirmation of failure. Sometimes a thing can be repaired but sometimes trying to repair it does nothing more than generate frustration. Sometimes it's better to just accept the loss and treat a failed project as a learning experience

### **284. Invest in Practice**

Practice Produces Peak Performance. Doing repetitive work is a great way to build skills and spending time practicing skills is always a smart investment. That especially applies when you practice something you aren't particularly good at. We all prefer to do the things we're good at but maybe instead we should be investing time and effort into improving skills in those things we aren't good at. We can each choose to either be exceptional at a few things or adequate at all things.

### **285. Artist's Statement**

Your "Artist's Statement" is a very personalized comment on what motivates you. I've always found most Artist's Statements to be pompous, pretentious and sometimes even a little intellectually insulting but even if it is only as an exercise in self analysis it's something you should put serious effort in writing. For years I resisted providing one but ultimately relented and produced this:

*I like making stuff. It's fun coming up with an idea, drawing a set of patterns, then building something from those patterns. Is what I make art? I don't know. Don't care. Somebody else can decide that. I just like making stuff.*

### **286. Persistence Wins**

Talent makes some things easy to do and intelligence makes some things easy to learn but persistence will provide more advantage than either intelligence or talent. Talent and intelligence are gifts you inherited but persistence is something you earn. You can choose to have it. Persistence is a lot more rare than talent or intelligent. If you were to make a wish and choose between talent, intelligence and persistence the smart choice is persistence. It always wins – and it's a wish anyone can make come true.

### **287. Managing vs Leading**

I think one of the best ever explanations of the difference between managing and leading is, *"Managing is doing it right but leadership is doing the right thing"*. It is also reasonable to suggest, *"Managing is following the rules but leading is creating new standards"*. Good management deals with immediate issues. Good leadership solves permanent issues. Each of us chooses which path to walk. I choose to adopt *"Lead, follow or get out of my way"*. We have enough managers, too many followers and a desperate shortage of leaders. Be a leader. Don't copy what others do and don't stay only on the safe paved road. Go off road and create new ways to do things. Take the lead.

### **288. Sharing is Caring**

It is also smart business. When your goal is to maximize profits and take every possible advantage without concern or consideration for others few others want to work with you. If instead you look to form partnerships and alliances for mutual benefit others want to be part of your team. Many years ago I adopted as a business motto "When we all share we all gain". Over the years I've done some dumb things and done a few smart things but the smartest thing I ever did was making that motto a key part of everything in business and personal affairs. Lone wolf individualism makes interesting stories but group efforts produce winning results. Build teams. Create cooperatives. Share.

## **Motivation – what lights the spark**

### **289. Understanding Motivation – Maslow's**

What motivates you? What motivates your employees? What motivates your students? What motivates your customers? What motivates your suppliers? If you understand what motivates people you understand how they behave. If you want to understand human motivation the best place to start is by examining Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It explains how human motivation comes in layers based on importance and how higher order needs like self-esteem come only after basic survival needs are met. Study the Maslow pyramid carefully and ask yourself where you fit and what motivates you. Then ask what motivates your employees, your students and your customers.

### **290. Self Analysis Questions**

If you hope to understand what motivates others you should start with a careful analysis of what motivates you. Ask yourself some important questions. Answer honestly.

- **Passion or Paycheck?** Why are you doing this?
- **Production Work.** Do you resent it
- **Risk Aversion.** Do you fear failure or accept it is part of learning?
- **Praise Junkie.** Are you motivated more by praise than pay?

- **Inventor or Duplicator.** How creative and inventive are you?
- **Perfectionist.** Do you see perfectionism as positive or negative?
- **Willingness to Sacrifice.** What are you willing to give up?

### **291. Pay or Praise?**

What motivates you? Do you make things because you hope to sell them or just because you enjoy making them? Must you choose? Must your work be only for personal pleasure or only for revenue? Why can't you have both? Isn't that how most of us live our lives? We do some things that aren't fun because we need to provide for our basic needs but do other things for fun and personal satisfaction. For many individuals the highest praise is when someone is willing to buy something we made. If someone is willing to exchange the money they earned from their efforts to buy something you created from your efforts they have both paid and praised you. What could be more motivating than that?

### **292. Finding Your Muse**

Creativity isn't something you can turn on like a light switch but there are ways you can coax it out to visit. Not everyone is activated the same. For some it might be a walk on the beach. For others it might be reading. For many it's while doing something repetitive and relaxing. One of my most creative times is just as I'm falling asleep. From some deep unexpected place an idea jumps out. I've learned to respond to that muse. In the past I would wake up in the morning thinking, *"I had this terrific idea last night. I remember thinking it was a terrific idea, now can't remember what it was"*. I've learned to not trust my memory and to value the times my muse visits. I don't try to remember. I get up and either make notes or a voice recording. Some of my best ideas, both for business and personal life, came from one of the nights when my muse came out to play. If you want to be more creative you need to learn what activates your muse.

### **293. Creative chain**

Creative ideas rarely appear as a glowing light bulb the way portrayed in cartoons but more often grow instead at the end of a chain of experiments – often with many failures as links in that chain. Success most often comes from refusing to accept failures and persistently adding more links to that chain. If you want to be creative start by accepting failure.

### **294. Relaxation Therapy**

Some artisans work for fun and others work for income but for some there is a third motivation. They do it to relax. Whether it's building a glass project, throwing clay on a wheel or applying paint to canvas, the work can be relaxing - even therapeutic. It can be an effective way to calm your mind and release stress.

### **295. Motivating to Buy**

If you want to sell your work you need to find ways to motivate your customers. The same things that motivate you work the same to motivate others.

- Why should they buy your work and something else?
- Is your work special? Is it unique?
- Are your prices reasonable?
- What do they gain by owning something you made?

If you expect people to buy something you made, play role reversal and imagine yourself as the customer. Would you buy it?

### **296. The Goldilocks Effect**

Much of what we do in life will produce results like the story of Goldilocks sampling the bears' porridge.

- 1<sup>st</sup> time you try it will be too small.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> time you try it will be too big.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> time you try it will be just right.

If you accept that failure almost always comes before success you are likely to experience a lot more successes.

### **297. Lead From Strength**

There are many slogans to promote leading from strength. *"Put your best foot forward"*. *"You have only once chance to make a first impression"*. To lead from strength you must start by understanding what your strengths are and equally what your weaknesses are. What are you good at? What are you terrible at? Where do you shine? Where do you suck? That understanding starts with understanding what motivates you. Why do you do what you do? Tell yourself the truth. When you understand your strengths, your weaknesses and your motivations you know how to use your strengths to shield your weaknesses. We all have strengths and weaknesses. In a perfect world all effort would be of equal value – but we don't live in a perfect world.

### **298. Comfort Zone Trap**

Your comfort zone can easily become a trap. You're motivated to focus on what you're already good at and avoid the things you're not so good at. That's natural. We all do it – but refusing to step outside your comfort zone can become a self-created change resistant cage that cancels progress. The more time you spend in that cage the harder it becomes to escape it.

### **299. Balancing Motivations**

What motivates you might not be the same things that motivate others. That's especially important if you want to sell your work. What your customers like and what they expect might be different than your likes and motivations. Can you find a balance between them? How much will you bend to accommodate any differences? If you expect someone to buy your work are you expecting them to buy what you like to make or are you prepared to adapt to make what they like to buy? Are you motivated to generate income or to enjoy the process of making things? Must you choose between one or the other? Can you have both?

### **300. Reject Tradition**

Embracing tradition is when you repeat what has been done in the past. That can be comforting but is also restricting. Too often something is done in a particular way for no reason other than that is what has always been done. Because *"We have always done it that way"*. Maybe it's time to stop being controlled by tradition. Maybe instead of copying what was done in the past you should be more motivated to try things that haven't yet been done. Instead of coping the past you can create the future. Invent. Innovate. What can be done tomorrow matters more than what was done yesterday. Reject tradition. Replace it with creativity.

### **301. Change Motivation**

Be motivated to change. It's common to resist change – even comforting. Why change how you do something when how you now do it is working? Like the old saying, *"If it ain't broke, don't fix it"*. That's valid, but also dangerous. Change is inevitable. It can be forced onto you. You can resist change but you can't stop it. If you can't stop it, why not embrace it? Why not be motivated to effect change? Why not be a leader and adopt new and better ways to do things?

Instead of resisting change, promote it. Instead of following the old ways, lead the way to new ways.

### **302. Be Motivated to Work**

Most individuals are motivated to find ways to avoid work and talk always about ways to work less.. Why be like most individuals? Why not be different and be motivated to work harder – to work longer – to work smarter – to get more things done? If you want to improve skills at something set aside time to practice. Invest the time. If you want to learn more about something invest time in studying. Instead of asking, “How soon can I quit today” ask instead “What else can I get done before I quit?”. If you want to succeed at something, start by motivating yourself to put in the work.

### **303. Adopt Optimism**

Make optimism your personal expectation. You will get what you expect. If you expect failure you will get failure. If you expect success you will get success. When you experience failure assume it was a mistake. It wasn't supposed to happen. Don't allow it to continue. Correct the mistake and keep working until failure is replaced with success. If the mistake repeats, correct it again. Keep correcting mistakes until they stop happening. Expect success. Work to make it happen.

### **304. Stubborn is a Positive Trait**

The old saying is true. “Slow and steady wins the race”. Like the tale of the Tortoise and the Hare. Sometimes the winner isn't the one that goes first but the one that quits last. Stubborn can also be an effective motivator. Stubborn people don't quit just because it's difficult. Instead, they keep pushing until it becomes steadily less difficult. They keep going until failure converts to success. If you want someone to get a job done, find someone stubborn. Even better, become the stubborn one that refuses to quit.

## **Innovation – where it starts**

### **305. How Creative are You?**

Indulge in a bit of self examination and self analysis.

- How innovative are you?
- Are you creative or adaptive?
- Do you prefer to invent new or improve on existing?
- Does innovation come easy to you or is it a struggle?

How important is innovation and creativity to you personally?

### **306. Dare to be Different**

If you choose to be different you should choose to ignore existing rules and make new ones. Take the path least travelled. Go where others refuse to go or fear to go. Go to new places. Hike off trail and explore the wild wilderness places. Experiment with new ideas. I tell students there are two basic rules to apply to art, music and most things in life.

- RULE 1 - If you do the work, you make the rules.
- RULE 2 – If you obey Rule 1 there won't be a Rule 2

### **307. Plan for Creativity**

Don't just wait for ideas to come and creativity to magically appear. Plan and prepare for it. Encourage it. Collect ideas. Keep records. Make notes. Record ideas when you first have them. Now. Not later. Immediately. When you think of something, record it. I expect many of us have

had the experience of remembering having had a terrific idea but now can't remember what that idea was. When you have an idea don't wait. Don't hesitate. Record it. Keep notes. Record your thoughts. If you don't have a pen and paper record your thoughts on our phone. Send yourself a text or phone message.

### **308. Invent Yourself.**

Always be learning. Always be exploring and experimenting. Make creativity and innovation part of your life by making time to learn new things and trying new ways to do things. Invest time to learn new techniques and experiment with new ideas. Make learning an important part of your routine. Always be moving forward and learning new things.

### **309. Innovators Don't Assume**

Creativity requires rejecting assumptions. Refuse to be guided by assumption. Trust nothing and believe nothing until you have tested to confirm. Many of our now routine practices are things we once assumed wouldn't work.

- Don't assume something WON'T work until you try it.
- Don't assume something WILL work until you try it.
- Test before trusting.

### **310. Creative Paralysis**

*"Nothing will stop you from being creative more than fear of making a mistake".*

..... John Cleese.

Don't let fear cripple your creativity. Fear of making a mistake easily leads to decision paralysis – a fear that making a mistake might leave you responsible for the mistake or the excuse, "I need more information". You will never have all the information you need or want. What you need is to make the best decision you can with the information you have.

### **311. Negative Decision Technique**

Sometimes when it's hard to decide what is the best choice you can try a reverse decision. Instead of asking which is the best choice do it backward and ask which is the worst choice? Keep all the worst choices until you eliminate all but one. I've used this often with a client that can't make a decision. Often when it's difficult choosing which is best it's easy to decide which is worst. Try it sometime on yourself – if even just for a practice exercise.

### **312. Coin Toss Decision Making**

Don't underestimate your subconscious ability to make a good decision. When you try hard but just can't choose a clear decision you could just toss a coin to decide – but there's a variation of the coin toss that many have learned is very effective. Chose a coin side. If it lands heads up "I'll do this" and if it lands tails up "I'll do that". Flip the coin high in the air and while it spins ask yourself which side you hope it lands on - then ignore where it lands. It's irrelevant. You made your decision before the coin landed. Thank the coin for helping you decide and walk away knowing you made the right decision.

### **313. Innovation Application.**

Everyone has ideas but not everyone does something with their ideas. No matter how creative, how unique or how imaginative ideas are they have no value without application. Until made to happen ideas remain nothing more than dreams. Maybe the magic secret to creativity and innovation isn't some form of inventive creative genius but just the courage to do something with creative ideas. Innovation means action. It means making something happen. Don't just have great ideas – be great by making ideas become reality. Put your ideas to work.



### **314. Innovative Entrepreneurship.**

Perhaps the best definition of “entrepreneur” is “someone who benefits from having taken a risk”. The key there is “risk”. Innovation has no value if nothing is done with it. Willingness to put an idea into practice requires accepting it might not work. Accepting it might not work requires accepting failure is more likely than success. Tolerance for failure is an essential part of innovation. Do what you can to minimize the risk but if you lack the courage to take the risk failure is a certainty.

### **315. Innovative Adaptation**

Where there is change there is opportunity. Change provides opportunity to implement innovation. While others resist change you should embrace it. Use it – even encourage it. Sometimes the best innovation is finding creative ways to adapt to change and take advantage of it.

### **316. Creative Triggers**

What triggers creative ideas? What initiates innovation? Is it something that just happens or is something you can initiate? Is it like a pump that must first be primed or a fire that requires special ignition? Can it be forced to turn on or must it be coaxed out? I expect everyone has things that trigger creative innovation but not everyone has the same triggers. If you want to encourage it, take some time to learn what works for you. I’ve learned that doing repetitive (often boring) tasks can bring on a relaxed state that either allows, or encourages, ideas to bubble up to the surface. One of my most creative times is just as I start to fall asleep or when relaxing listening to music. I’ve learned to keep a recorder or notepad beside my bed to make notes. If you want to be more innovative learn what turns on your creative triggers.

### **317. Innovation Obstruction**

Just as there are things that will encourage innovation there are things that will obstruct and discourage it. The greatest obstruction is fear. Fear of failure. Many great ideas are never implemented only out of fear they might not work. Don’t let your fear obstruct your creativity. Instead turn fear into a stubborn commitment to keep trying until you succeed. Find innovative ways to bypass failure.

### **318. Tradition Kills Innovation**

Tradition can be the enemy of innovation. It encourages change resistance. We have all seen examples of, “We do it this way because we have always done it this way”. How many great ideas were never implemented only because those ideas challenged tradition? If you want to be creative and innovative start by ignoring tradition. How something was done in the past is irrelevant. You need to ask how it can be done in the future.

### **319. Is Innovation Always Good?**

Not always. There is good change and there is bad change. Change for the sake of change is foolish. Sometimes a small improvement is more appropriate than a complete change. Don’t resist change but equally resist becoming a “fashion innovator” implementing change only because you were bored with how you’ve been doing it and want to do it differently. Sometimes the adage “*If it ain’t broke don’t fix it.*” applies and should be respected.

### **320. Innovation Rules**

Innovating means doing something original. It means creating new ways and rejecting old ways. It means canceling rules set by others. I practice, preach and teach two basic rules I believe should apply in everything we do.

- RULE 1 – If you do the work, you make the rules.

- **RULE 2** – If you obey Rule 1 there won't be a Rule 2.

Don't break rules. Ignore them. Reject that there are any rules other than those you make for yourself. If you want to innovate start by rejecting rules. How something was done before or how someone else does something is irrelevant. You make your own rules.

### **321. Innovative Marketing**

Innovation is more than just finding new ways to make things and new ways to do things. It's also about new ways to sell your work and advertise your services. You don't want to copy what others make so you equally shouldn't be copying how others sell their work. Be creative. Invent new ways and experiment with innovative variations. When the internet was first introduced using online shopping carts was the hot new thing and worked great. Artisans everywhere set up websites with shopping carts and started partnering with internet sales agents like Amazon and Etsy. It worked well at first but has now become so saturated with supply it's no longer as effective as it once was. Artisans need to move past the old traditional marketing methods and experiment with new ideas. Stop copying what others do and invent new ways.

### **322. Innovative Marketing Example**

When I decided to expand our glass art business to include selling pottery supplies and equipment I needed a way to advertise and connect with prospective customers. Print advertising would be much too expensive to justify so I considered contacting various pottery groups and thought about collecting email addresses to send out email advertising. Then, I remembered how many email ads I get each day and how pretty much all get expediently deleted unread. I needed something different and something that would work quick. Decided to go "old school" with old-fashioned snail mail. Went to Google and asked for "potters". Chose a territory limit and made a list of everyone listed on Google then printed up address labels for each one. Printed up 150 flyers. Put each in an envelope with an address label and stamp then dropped the bundle off at the Post Office. 3 days later the phone calls started. In any promotional campaign it's assumed if you get 10% respond it was a success. I got over 50%. More than half the people I sent the flyer to either emailed or phoned me. We all get loads of email and delete most of it unread – but we don't get much mail directed to us so even if just out of curiosity more recipients are likely to look at it. Those initial contacts told others and I now have over 100 steady customers buying supplies from us

### **323. Innovative Purchasing**

We all want to get the lowest possible price for anything we buy but there's a limit to how much you can reasonably expect your suppliers to cut their prices. Instead of asking them to just cut the prices you should instead look for innovative ways to help them reduce their costs so they can afford to reduce prices to you.

### **324. Innovative Purchasing Examples**

I wanted a price reduction on clay and glazes to make us more price competitive. We're not big enough to use purchasing power as leverage so I needed something different. Instead of asking what their best price would be for what they have in stock I asked if they could give me a list of their production schedule for different materials so instead of ordering from their inventory I could order by adding to what they produced. This cuts their costs so they can pass on that cost reduction as a lower price to me. I do something similar with other suppliers. Instead of ordering from what they have in stock I "piggyback" my order to be added onto their order from their supplier.

### **325. Innovative Market Display**

When you exhibit your work for sale at a market everything you do to get more people to come look at what you offer increases sales. Good signs and a well organized display makes a big difference but an exceptionally effective way to draw people to your exhibit is video demonstrations. I made up some videos of the work being done and put them on a continuous loop to play on a monitor. The response was immediate and dramatic. People walking along would see the video playing and come over to watch it. Many that stopped to watch stayed to buy something. I've suggested this to other artisans and all reported similar results with increased sales.

## **Alliances – building teams**

### **326. Compete or Cooperate**

There are times when you should compete and times when you should cooperate. Competition builds strength but cooperation usually produces better results. Whether to compete against someone or cooperate with them can be a difficult choice but one you should take the time to carefully consider. Working cooperatively in partnership or in a team with others is almost always better than lone wolf individualism.

### **327. Build Teams**

When everyone rows together the boat moves faster. That applies equally to those you work with as to those you employ. On a ship the captain plots the course but without a crew the boat stays tied to the dock. Treat your employees as team members. Treat your suppliers and customer as team members. Reject hierarchies. Everyone has a place on the team. Everyone is equally important.

### **328. Specialization of Labour**

Our society is built on specialization of labour – not on expecting each of us to be fully self-sufficient and do everything ourselves. We rely on trading what we do in exchange for what others do. A perfect trade is when everyone benefits equally. A great business partnership would be someone that excels at sales but sucks at accounting working with an exceptional accountant skilled at controlling costs. A quote I remember from years ago, “The perfect corporate CEO is someone that can have a skilled salesman pushing to spend money to promote sales working with a penny pinching accountant concerned only with minimizing costs and getting them to work together without killing each other”. You should take some time to learn what your personal strengths and weakness are then partner with someone with opposite strengths and weakness.

### **329. Partner with your Customers**

If you sell wholesale or on consignment to shops or galleries for retail resale don't think of them as customers but instead as partners in your business. They are a partner in your efforts to sell your work to the retail buyer. You make it and they sell it. It's a team effort. You should try to find out what you can do to help them sell your work. Look at ways you can adapt to their needs and how to work together to make the partnership mutually beneficial

### **330. Retail/Wholesale Alliance**

A popular and misguided complaint with many artisans is crying about the profit markup a shop or gallery adds to the price. Markup from wholesale to retail is usually 100%. If they buy wholesale for \$1 they expect to sell it retail for \$2. Consignment shops sometimes take a smaller percentage as a sales commission. Retail price double wholesale is so standard it's called “keystone” price.

Many artisans complain they think it's unfair they buy all the materials and do all the work and the shop gets half the price for just selling it. That complain is misguided. The reseller earns that profit markup. They have an overhead (wages, rent, utilities, etc) that is as relentless as gravity. Their expense continues even if they sell nothing. If you think running a retail business is easy money you should stop complaining about the profit markup and open your own shop.

### **331. Provide Drop Shipping**

Drop shipping is when a shop or gallery you sell wholesale to places an order with you and you ship it to the customer they sold it to. This allows them to sell items they didn't have in stock and be able to reduce the selling price because they didn't have the expense of handling the order. It works the same when your supplier provides drop shipping. You can offer everything that supplier has without the expense of carrying the inventory and handling the order. Just be careful when you offer this service you are doing it for shops that do carry some of your work on display and not one of the many internet sellers that carry no inventory but only advertise it for resale for a sales commission.

### **332. Customer Drop Shipping Example**

I sell a variety of glass art to gift shops and galleries. Some of it (especially the stained glass model ships I make) is pretty fragile and tricky to ship. It's common for a shop to lose a possible sale because the buyer is concerned they can't safely transport it home. To remove that fear I offer a drop ship service for them. For a fixed fee of 10% of the wholesale price (20% of wholesale) I will take care of it. The gallery makes the sale, sends me the information who to ship it to and I make one and ship it. The gallery gets paid by the customer they sold it to and I bill the gallery the wholesale price plus shipping fee. I tell the gallery owners to teach their employees when they hear someone comment, *"But, how could we get it home?"* to step in and suggest, *"Why don't you let us do it for you?"*

### **333. Supplier Drop Shipping Example**

I sell a lot of kilns but definitely couldn't afford to carry an inventory of every make and model of kiln available so I rely on buying them when a customer orders one. I could order the customer's purchase from my supplier and have it sent to me but far better is to instead have the kiln maker ship it direct to the customer. I talk with the customer to find out what they need, take their order then have the kiln maker ship the chosen kiln direct to the customer. I processed the sale but didn't handle the kiln. I do the same with coldworking machinery and pottery equipment like wheels, slab rollers and pug mills. By removing the expense of handling the goods I can offer better prices to my customers. It's a 3 way alliance. The kiln maker sells a kiln, I make a profit on the sale and the customer gets their selection at a good price. Win-win-win.

### **334. Lend Your Website**

One way you can help your reseller customers is by configuring your website so they can use it by linking to it from their website. That allows them to take orders for things you make they might not have in stock. It's especially useful if you provide drop ship service. That encourages your wholesale customer to act as a sales agent in addition to selling from their own inventory.

### **335. Sales Alliances**

When you work with someone else or hire someone else to sell your work you are forming an alliance wherein you have acquired a partner. You should treat them as a partner – and should also expect them to treat you as a partner. Some of the different alliances you might have to help you sell your work include:

**Wholesale Resellers** – they buy your work and resell it – usually for twice what they paid you.

**Consignment Sales** – they take your work and display it for sale. When it sells they pay you and take a percentage commission for making the sale. That percentage might as little as 20% or as much as 60%.

**Sales Agents** – act as your representative to sell your work wholesale and take a commission for each sale made – usually 15% but sometimes more.

**Space Rental Galleries** – they display your work on their premises for a fixed monthly fee usually based on square footage of space used. They sell your work and take a percentage of the sale as a fee – usually 10 – 15% of the selling price.

**Retail Markets** – you pay a fixed rent for space to display your work and keep all the revenue for anything you sell.

### **336. Partnership Agreements**

Most people in business believe “Good agreements make good friends”. Clearly worded agreements ensure all participants clearly understand what is expected. The most important of such contracts are the **Terms and Conditions of Sale** that clearly state what you expect to give and what you expect to get. Avoid assumptions. Assumptions too easily lead to misunderstandings. Take some time to draft the details of agreements with those you work with.

### **337. Alliances Must Be Fair**

Partnerships and alliances should provide mutual benefit for all involved. They work best when every participant has as much concern for how they can help as for how they can benefit. They fail when one participant tries to gain more benefit than they are willing to allow to others. You should be fair to those you partner with but should also ensure they are being fair to you. Do not take advantage of others and do not allow others to take advantage of other. Make fair and reasonable rules and firmly enforce those rules.

### **338. Internet Resellers – Be Cautious**

Appearing everywhere are assorted internet resellers that carry no inventory on display but sell only from their website. Businesses like Amazon and Etsy are examples of such resellers with dozens of smaller variants working the same way. They advertise your work for sale, collect payment for the sale then have you provide the item sold and ship it to the end buyer. Be VERY careful working with such companies. There are some serious concerns.

- They provide a buffer between you and the end customer.
- They are not mutually supportive and will routinely offer for sale products in direct competition with you.
- They often offer sales conditions you might not agree with.
- Many expect you to accept a shipping fee far less than you can match.

If you decide to work with an internet reseller be sure you clearly understand the negatives as well as the positives.

### **339. Partnership Pricing**

If you sell direct retail (either online or through retail markets) and also sell wholesale to shops or galleries you should set your retail price the same as the price your wholesale customer expects to sell it for. For example, if you sell an item for \$10 to a shop that expects to resell it for \$20 your retail selling price should also be \$20. If your resale price is less than that set by your wholesale customer you are in effect in competition with your wholesale customer. That is neither fair nor reasonable.

### **340. Sales Agents**

A sales agent can be the best thing to happen to your business or it can be the worst. It can make your business or it can break it. Ideally a sales agent is a true partner that handles all sales contacts to leave you free to concentrate on production. A good agent will represent you in good faith – but not all agents act in good faith. A good one will avoid representing anyone that might be in conflict or competition with you – but some will represent anyone willing to allow them representation. A good agent will put effort into increasing sales for you but some just take on as many clients as they can expecting offering more supplier options is an easy way to increase their sales commission. If you decide to work with a sales agents take care to select one that will be a partner and take special care to establish a clearly understood agreement.

### **341. Cooperatives**

A Cooperative is a group of individuals or businesses working together as a team for mutual benefit. They work well when everyone contributes for the common good but not so well when some members try to take advantage of other members. If you consider joining a cooperative be sure to examine it carefully and confirm it operates as team with everyone helping each other. Be especially cautious about cooperatives that were created only to solicit government grants or to create employment for the cooperative founders.

### **342. Buyer Cooperatives**

Bigger buyers usually get better prices. That leaves smaller businesses at a competitive disadvantage to bigger ones that qualify for lower prices. An effective way to qualify as a bigger buyer to get those better prices is to partner with others in a group buy as a cooperative. Shipping bigger orders also reduces the per item cost for shipping. Instead of trying to push your supplier to grant you lower prices you might try forming a partnership with others to place bigger orders.

### **343. Buyer Cooperative Example**

Our business is in Victoria BC Canada. It's not a big city so there is a relatively limited variety of supplies and equipment available here. We created a cooperative called the **Pottery Posse** for ceramic artists and the **Glass Gang** for glass artists. Orders are collected from local participants to consolidate into a group order we place with wholesale suppliers in WA and OR. Every three weeks we send our truck south to the US and pick up the consolidated orders to bring back to Victoria. We provide the freight and do the Customs clearances. This allows local artisans to not just get lower prices but to have access to the significantly larger selection available from large US wholesale suppliers. Our partnership with the US suppliers provides a price discount that allows us to offer everything they sell delivered in Victoria at the US supplier's website prices. Cooperative participants get free freight and free Customs clearance.

### **344. Canuck Club**

The **Canuck Club** we created is another example of a Buyer's Cooperative. Importing goods from the US into Canada can be expensive and complicated with Customs import issues. Many Canadians reach south to US suppliers for the bigger variety of what is available there but importing goods from the US into Canada can be expensive and complicated. We rent warehouse space in WA state where Canuck Club participants can have their purchase sent to for us to pick up, clear through Canada Customs and bring to Victoria for participants to either pick up or have us ship to them. Your business would benefit by working cooperatively with others. If you can't find a cooperative to work with maybe you should create one.

### **345. Piggyback Orders**

A Piggyback Order is when instead of ordering from your supplier's inventory you add your order onto an order they place with their supplier or add it onto their production run. They either order

extra just for you or produce more just for you. This is an effective way to reduce costs so the cost reduction can be passed on as a reduced price. It works the same when your customer piggybacks their order onto your production schedule or your supplier order.

### **346. Example Piggyback Order**

The company I buy clay from gives me their production schedule for clay they plan to make. I add my order onto that production run so they make extra for me. They don't make clay to add to their inventory to be sold when ordered but instead make clay specifically for me knowing it is already sold. I do the same with companies I buy glass from. My supplier tells me when they plan to place an order from the manufacturer they buy from and I add my order onto theirs. I do the same with my customers. I give them a price discount for advance orders piggybacked onto my supplier orders. In many cases (even for large items like kilns) I provide free freight. Everyone benefits from the improved efficiency.

### **347. Skill Compensation**

Perhaps the most significant advantage to forming alliances and partnerships is how they can bring strengths to compensate for weaknesses. You might be skilled at making things but not at selling them. You might be great at selling things but lack the skills or equipment to make them. Two individuals with opposite skills often make the best partners.

### **348. Play Fair**

Everything always comes back to that all important four letter word. FAIR. Play fair. Be fair to others and insist they be fair to you. Do not try to take advantage of others and do not allow others to take advantage of you. If you choose to take unfair advantage of others it is your fault when a partnership fails but equally so it is your fault if you allow others to take unfair advantage of you. Play fair. Always. Alliances only work when participants have equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal benefits.

### **349. Attitude Matters**

Attitude is the key to whether or not alliances and partnerships work. It's about rejecting the "lone wolf individualism" of doing everything by yourself and adopting instead the belief cooperation is better than competition. It's about a willingness to be part of a team effort. It's about willingness to share with others and support others so they can share with you and support you. It's about building teams.

### **350. GIGO**

Garbage In Garbage Out is a reference originally applied to computer programming but applies equally to alliances, partnerships and most everything we do in life. What you get out of a relationship depends heavily on what you put into it. If you put effort into making it work, it's likely to work but if you expect to avoid effort and just coast along enjoying the benefits it's likely to fail. Like marriages, alliances only work when all members participate to make them work.

## **Quips & Quotes – words well crafted**

### **351. Best Teacher**

A good teacher answers every question asked. A better teacher answer questions the student didn't know they should ask. The best teacher teaches how to find answers.

**352. Stupid Questions**

Yes, there are stupid questions. Any question you failed to ask because you were afraid to ask is a stupid question.

**353. Best Ways**

Usually the best way to do something is the way you best like doing it – but sometimes the best way to do something is the way you haven't tried yet.

**354. Experience**

Do you have 10 years experience or do you have 2 years experience you repeated 5 times?

**355. Failure**

*"I haven't failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work".*

.....Thomas Edison.

**356. Fear**

*"Nothing will stop you from being creative so effectively as fear of making a mistake".*

.....John Cleese

**357. Pessimism**

*"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty".*

.....Winston Churchill

**358. Change**

*"When there's change there's opportunity."*

.....Jack Welch

**359. Persistence**

*"For most, success came just one step beyond the greatest failure"*

.....Napoleon Hill

**360. Success**

*"Success is mostly just luck. Just ask anyone who has failed."*

My experience has been that the harder I worked the luckier I got.